

2003

# "Above the noise and the glory": tiers of propaganda in great war literature

Margaret L. Clark

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, mclark7@lsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_dissertations](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations)



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Clark, Margaret L., "'Above the noise and the glory': tiers of propaganda in great war literature" (2003). *LSU Doctoral Dissertations*. 3342.

[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_dissertations/3342](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/3342)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

“ABOVE THE NOISE AND THE GLORY:”  
TIERS OF PROPAGANDA IN GREAT WAR LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Margaret L. Clark

B. A., Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1997

M.A., Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1999

May 2003

For Aubrey and all those  
who have known both worlds

Few have seen as many masks fall as we out here,  
few have seen so much baseness, cowardice,  
weakness, self-seeking and vanity as we,  
and few so much worthiness and silent nobility of soul.  
Above the noise and the glory of all battles and victories,  
the image of this hour continues to shine within me,  
and in my senses, as the strongest impression of my whole life.  
-----Walter Flex, *A Wanderer Between Two Worlds*

## Acknowledgments

Before the spring of 1995, it never occurred to me to pursue a graduate school program of study. My plans were to finish undergraduate school and then return to the business world from which I had escaped two years earlier. But on a warm afternoon in April, in a tiny office in the back of Allen Hall, Dr. Josephine A. Roberts - “Jo” to so many who respected, loved and admired her - advised me that not to pursue a doctoral program would be terribly regrettable. She challenged me to attain the goal in three and one-half years, and she promised to guide me to the finish. Indeed, she has.

This dissertation had its true beginnings at a family reunion during the summer of my twelfth year when my maternal grandfather attempted to silence my youthful exuberance with the admonition that children should be seen and not heard. He thrust into my hands a tattered copy of *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke* and decreed that I was not to speak again until I had finished my study of “Mr. Brooke.” What he intended as a punitive measure became a passion and led me to delve into a study of American and British Great War history and literature with many highly respected teachers who have inspired, believed and participated in this dissertation. I am deeply grateful to my Committee Chair, Professor John R. May, whose encouragement and care in sharpening the focus of this project, as well as countless drafts of my work over the past four years, have been immeasurable. As Minor Professor for this project, and one from whom I learned much as his student and a teacher, Professor David H. Culbert has been influential in helping me get to the heart of what I want to say. For anyone who knows my quirks, this is no small feat. Professor Rebecca W. Crump, who has made the pursuit of this

dissertation possible in countless ways, has been similarly influential both in and out of the classroom. Her teaching is the model to which I aspire, while her guidance and editing skills helped me navigate some difficult waters. To Professor Karl A. Roeder, Jr., I owe much. It was in his History of World War I class in the spring of 1997 that this project began to flourish, and for the past five years, he has shared with me everything from his knowledge and library, to a Belgian waffle outside the Menin Gate in Ypres. Teaching a learning community with him this past fall was one of the grandest experiences I have known.

Many other influential teachers and administrators have helped shape this project. I would like to thank, in particular, Professor Bainard Cowan who has consistently been close at hand with encouragement, suggestions and a joke or two to ease the pain of writer's block or ubiquitous self-doubt; Professor Michelle Zerba for providing a most gracious letter of introduction which encouraged the Brooke Trustees to place the full collection of Brooke's personal papers and manuscripts at my disposal; Professor John Fischer for his interest, suggestions and expertise in assisting me resolve various textual inconsistencies; and Professor Lawrence Sasek and Gloria Sasek for their unfailing support, friendship, encouragement and love.

Louisiana State University has supported my research both institutionally, in the form of a Learning Community grant, and locally, in the form of supportive and generous English and History Departments. I am indebted to Professor Malcolm Richardson, Chair of the English Department, Professor Paul F. Paskoff, Chair of the History Department, and Professor Elsie Michie, Associate Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies of

the English Department and true supporter of graduate students, for their interest in and support of this project and its incorporation as the literature component of a learning community course offering.

This project represents much archival research, none of which would have been possible without the assistance of numerous archivists and researchers both in the United States and Europe. I would like to thank Jacqueline Cox, Head Archivist at The Modern Archives Centre of King's College, Cambridge for her attention to my requests during my stay at King's, and her willingness to provide further materials after my return to Baton Rouge; Mr. Sam Hayward and the staff of The Orchard in Grantchester for furnishing photographs of Rupert Brooke; the staff of the Photograph, Art and Printed Materials Departments of the Imperial War Museum in London for photocopying dozens of photographs, posters and diaries; the librarians at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Harvard University, University of Vermont and Howard University for the hospitality and gracious accommodations during my research visits. And I particularly want to thank Ms. Avril Williams for her very gracious hospitality during our stay at her farmhouse in Auchonvillers, France. It was an exceptionally memorable experience to celebrate my birthday on the Somme in the very farmhouse Edmund Blunden speaks of in his memoir, *Undertones of War*.

My sister, Susan Putonen, and my niece, Gretchen, have not only supplied the laptop computer on which my field research was recorded, but also copious amounts of reassurance and support. And I particularly want to thank Kris Ross, a treasured friend and exceptional scholar in the English Department at Louisiana State University, for her

encouragement and sage counsel that sustained me during the final hours of producing this project. To Susan, Gretchen and Kris, much is owed.

So too is much owed to Aubrey Komurke who dutifully proofread each chapter, questioned areas of argument and believed the goal would be realized even when I did not. And he performed all this with no concern for the suffering he was enduring at the time, which has been far greater than that which most of us will ever know. Like Walter Flex, a wanderer between two worlds, he has known the world of baseness and the world of the silent nobility of the soul, and has navigated both spheres with dignity.

As I researched the lives and literature of these five Great War writers, and communed with the spirits of those, known and unknown, who rest in the fields of the Somme Salient, Ypres, Passchendaele and Deville Wood, my thoughts were often with yet another soldier whose spirit lives on, though his body now rests in “some corner of a foreign field,” simply known as An-Loc.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
March 2003

M.L.C.

## Preface

In his study of the British experience on the Western Front from 1914 to 1918, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell endeavors to delineate how life and literature, as myth-making, enter into a state of reciprocity. In terms of myths, he places particular emphasis on how World War I relied upon prior or “inherited” myths while simultaneously generating new ones that have become “part of the fiber of our own lives.”<sup>1</sup> While he admittedly looks at the Western Front from 1914 to 1918 only through the lens of the British experience, and discusses only tangentially and superficially the literature of women directly involved in the trench experience, this present study augments some aspects of Fussell’s model in the manner in which it views the war experience through the eyes of four American women whose writings reflect tiers or stages of literary propaganda that are not only specific to World War I but also applicable to modes of behavior and moral philosophies associated with political and ideological wars and conflicts actually existing or threatening to develop today. The literature of Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Mary Borden, Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Willa Cather bears similarities to, or was influenced by Rupert Brooke, and thus this study would not be complete without a discussion of his contribution not only to World War I poetry but also the propaganda of purpose.

The term *propaganda* may be defined within the context of what Stanley Cunningham refers to as the “philosophy of propaganda, a theoretical inquiry into the phenomenon of mass persuasion or symbolically induced influences,”<sup>2</sup> rather than the urge to define it within the context of truth or lie. For many, propaganda has come to be



synonymous with falsities, distortions, exaggeration and intentional fallacies, but in its purest and historical context, propaganda is not a form of rhetoric designed to mold an audience into subscribing to a certain opinion or belief.<sup>3</sup>

What is universally held is that propaganda had its origins in a specific institution originating in Rome during the seventeenth century, the convening of the *Congregatio de propaganda fide* by Pope Gregory XV. Comprised of thirteen cardinals, the Congregation, as an arm of the Roman Catholic Church, was empowered with all things necessary to institute those reforms and powers essential in the creation of incontestable and firm powers of control that would assure uniform and rigorous adherence to established doctrines of belief and practice throughout all mission territories. Thus, the term *propaganda* originates within an historical rather than rhetorical framework. Its origination comes from a time-specific event in the history of the Roman Catholic Church's global community, rather than a rhetorical or critical application.

As Cunningham points out, some linguistic historians, such as Erwin W. Fellows, have suggested that the association between the term *propaganda* and the Roman Catholic Church "probably accounts for the negative connotations traditionally associated with the word, especially in Protestant and English-speaking countries into which the Congregation had extended its influence."<sup>4</sup> However, such an explanation is not totally credible. Although one may contend that propaganda and the state had a longstanding relationship prior to World War I, it was not until the advent of the War that propaganda began to take on negative connotations as the gap between the portrayal of war as "a noble calling" and the reality of its consequences were realized by both those on the home front and

battlefront. “Instead of realizing the close relationship among morale, education, and propaganda, Americans [and in 1916 British subjects as well] considered propaganda a synonym for government lies, and that interpretation has remained to today.”<sup>5</sup>

In its original sense, propaganda denoted a tangible and specific body designed to assure unquestioned uniform and universal accord and to dispel any misunderstanding of prescribed dogma. Thus, propaganda is directly conjoined to faith and belief, and its language is historically faith- rather than truth-based. It is imperative at this point to define what here is meant by language, as opposed to rhetoric, so that we do not become irretrievably ensnared in the quicksand of vague semantics. Language is a system of signs and symbols that, taken together, have meaning in both their manner of placement and application. Rhetoric is persuasion that relies upon the speaking and writing of language for its effectiveness. For example, one might regard the depiction of a French 75 cannon as a language of war but, in and of itself, divested of any active speaking and/or writing, it is not rhetoric. Language, as a compilation of signs and symbols, can be separated from rhetoric, but rhetoric is always under the language umbrella.

Thus, in its earliest meaning, propaganda has an association with faith and ecclesiastical moorings. But, as Joseph Shipley points out, in its etymology so too does the term have ties to agricultural meanings of grafting, planting and cultivation.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, propaganda can be defined as the planting or sowing of language, and its linguistic links to growth, propagation, increase, and cultivation are easily seen in agricultural metaphors in modern propaganda theory. Although by the late nineteenth century propaganda and advertising became “half brothers” connecting a concrete object

with human desires and directed opinion,<sup>7</sup> the term has its roots in the natural and domestic landscape. As demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, it possesses a greater impact in its relationship to war when played out against the backdrop of the domestic landscape imposed upon that of the battlefield. The short stories of Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Mary Borden succeed in their political and ideological aims of forming or changing American public opinion because they employ the language and metaphors of the domestic and the natural--the language inscribed by the linguistic history of the word *propaganda*.

With both historical and etymological links to faith, propagation, and nature, it is apparent how, by the early years of the twentieth century, famous writers--those adept in influencing public sentiment through language and rhetoric--were used by the state to author propaganda designed to form public opinion. Just as in 1622, when Pope Gregory XV established the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to impose unity and uniformity in practices and beliefs throughout the territories under the control of the Roman Catholic Church, on September 2, 1914, C. F. G. Masterman, the newly appointed minister of Great Britain's war propaganda bureau, convened a secret meeting, attended by twenty-five of Britain's most famous literary authors,<sup>8</sup> with the intent to determine how literature could be initially written and then disseminated in such a way as to aid the Allied war aims and raise the moral tone of a nation (Great Britain). The literary genre used to attain this end was the pamphlet, which had historically been used in Britain in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century arguments amongst various religious sects.

As Paul Fussell points out, the language of not only these pamphlets, designed to urge recruitment and advance a sense of war against Germany as virtuous, but all war literature (and especially British war poetry) was one of irony. The “static world, where the values appeared stable and where meanings of abstractions seemed permanent and reliable,”<sup>9</sup> was at the very heart of Britain’s being, through which flowed strongly the lifeblood of patriotism, honor, and glory. These abstractions, and the manner in which they ultimately are revealed as simultaneously truth and sham, are portrayed in an American, rather than British, context in the immediate post-war writings of Willa Cather and Dalton Trumbo. The World War I American canon of literature looks to Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, e. e. cummings and William Faulkner as representatives of a post-war chronicle of America’s participation in the War and reflection upon that participation as sham; however, they did not speak for an entire nation, as is often the assumption. I have included Willa Cather’s World War I novel, *One of Ours*, as an apt example of how the abstractions Fussell speaks of remained viable after the War in the minds not only of veterans, but also the families of those soldiers who died in the war effort during 1917 and 1918.<sup>10</sup>

Willa Cather’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *One of Ours*, serves as an example of how propaganda is a cultural phenomenon about which people speak both in transmitting and reflecting upon historical events in immediacy and distance, and acts as an example of how propaganda does not negate free choice. Although Claude Wheeler, the soldier-hero in *One of Ours*, like Rupert Brooke, viewed participation in the War as a soldier to be a noble calling that would give meaning to a hitherto purposeless life, his choice to

volunteer was a free one and not truly manipulated or prompted by a state-induced coercive force relying upon defective information used to create guilt or fear in the individual. For Rupert Brooke in 1914, enlistment and service in the war effort was for King and country; for Claude Wheeler in 1917, it was for self and the boy next door.

Fussell's sense of irony and depiction of Great War literature as elevated, formulaic, and clichéd,<sup>11</sup> is valid when one considers British male literary reportage, but not that of the American writer, and particularly the American woman writer as I point out in the discussion of Mary Borden's *The Forbidden Zone* in Chapter Four. Although Fussell's work stands as an influential contribution in the immediate post-Vietnam War years to an understanding of how the literature and mythology of World War I "has proved crucial political, rhetorical, and artistic determinants on subsequent life,"<sup>12</sup> the content of that understanding is not only dated, but geographically bound--even sexist--by virtue of its emphasis on the male British trench experience on the Western Front. It ignores how the origins of Great War literature as propaganda began with the use of pamphlets as recruitment instruments, and why this matters.<sup>13</sup>

One of the earliest of such pamphlets, and the one that had the greatest impact on Rupert Brooke and others who would join Kitchener's Army of Pals Battalions,<sup>14</sup> was *To Arms!*, a stirring call to arms designed to appeal not only to the individual's sense of duty, honor, and sacrifice, but also ultimately to a fear of guilt and shame if the individual chose not to respond in the manner the state desired. Written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *To Arms!* proclaimed, "Happy the man who can die with the thought that in this greatest crisis of all he had served his country to the uttermost, but who could bear the thoughts of

him who lives with the memory that he had shirked his duty and failed his country at the moment of her need?”<sup>15</sup>

Because language, as previously defined, has the ability to condition responses, and when those responses are faith- or belief-based, appealing to abstractions like duty, honor, and shame, the historical definition of propaganda, as that which is planted to harvest an unquestioning and universal accord amongst a given territorial or political group or groups of people, becomes abundantly visible in the aims and designs of war literature of 1914. *To Arms!*, like Rudyard Kipling’s *The New Army*, which I discuss in Chapter Two, presented propaganda of purpose and guilt, two motivators that figure prominently in the genesis of the 1914 war sonnets of Rupert Brooke.

On August 4, 1914, when the German Army invaded neutral Belgium after its King refused to allow Germany free passage of its troops across the country, Britain could not remain passive and watch Belgium’s freedoms denied. Britain entered the war to defend “poor little Belgium.”<sup>16</sup> The plight of Belgium as the innocent violated became the grist of Great War literature during 1914 and 1915, and particularly the poetry of Rupert Brooke and Dorothy Canfield Fisher’s short stories, especially “A Little Kansas Leaven” and “La Pharmacienne.” The effect of this historical event, and its role in a developing propaganda designed to effect choices and judgments on the part of the individual, are dynamics of propaganda discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

Writers such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, and Sir James M. Barrie were on the Wellington House British propaganda ministry payroll and thus represented the propaganda of state to individual. If propaganda, as evidenced by the

Roman Catholic Church's actions in 1622, flows from the state to the individual, is it propaganda when the individual authors material on his own volition that mirrors doctrines of beliefs planted and cultivated by the state?

Propaganda that is formulated by the state or an organized body, with the intent to persuade or convince a wide and undifferentiated audience, is what David L. Alltheide and John M. Johnson have defined as *traditional propaganda*. It utilizes "a contrived and artful way of presenting some facts and interpretations as though they were truthful. Bureaucratic propaganda uses truth for organizational goals."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the wartime propaganda, what Cunningham calls "a limited-time campaign of impression management within which an assortment of propaganda categories and techniques comes into play"<sup>18</sup> that Great Britain advanced in pamphlet production is a traditional propaganda in its dissemination of interpretations of how society will view the individual who acts in a manner contrary to what the states believes to be in the individual's best interest.

In Chapter Three, I discuss how Mikhail Bakhtin defines paternalism as a prior discourse, but here it is abundantly clear that paternalism, defined as the intervention by the state or individual with the actions or decisions of another, becomes closely aligned with traditional propaganda. Paternalism, as a limitation on freedom of choice, works with propaganda, as seen in the discussion of Mary Borden's *The Forbidden Zone*, when moral paternalism--intervention designed to protect the moral welfare of the individual--clashes with legal moralism--the concept of prohibiting those things that are morally wrong or degrading and enforcing what the state decrees as right.

Financing and running an Allied field hospital in Flanders during 1915 and then later in the Somme Salient during 1916, Mary Borden questioned the morality of healing soldiers only to put them back in the line of fire. Couching her arguments in naturalistic metaphors appealing to agricultural landscapes--words historically and etymologically associated with propaganda and cultivation--Borden's work is included in this study as evidence of the relationship and connections among propaganda, nature and paternalistic language. Just as conscription (instituted in Great Britain in 1916 and in the United States in 1917) is an example of paternalism in the form of legal moralism, so too is Borden, because of the manner in which she questions the sanity of returning soldiers to the field, an agent of propaganda in the form of moral paternalism. Thus the individual--Mary Borden in this case--can and indeed becomes a propagandist when, as in her short story "Conspiracy," the individual advances doctrinal beliefs that mirror the types of propaganda issued by the state.

Mary Borden is also included in this study because of the manner in which her stories reflect how transgressive propaganda inverts social and political hierarchies and subsequently renders once effective language ineffective. Again, definitions are instructive. Transgression, as utilized by John Kucich, is seen as concealment, deception, secrecy and reserve. But, in Foucaultian terms, transgression is not rebellion or deception, and it does not desire to tear down boundaries or limits. When a limit or boundary is transgressed, there is always another or new limit. Transgression "forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes, to experience its



positive truth in its downward fall.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, transgression is connected to violence, not because of what it destroys, but because of what it reveals.

July 1, 1916 is almost universally regarded as a calamitous day in the history of the British military experience. In an effort to relieve the pressure German troops were exacting on the French forces at Verdun during the spring of 1916, British commander-in-chief, Sir Douglas Haig, agreed to launch an offensive on the Somme front that would begin on June 24, 1916. After seven days of bombardment in which more than 1.5 million shells were fired, the British Fourth Army, under General Henry S. Rawlinson, made the principal thrust north of the Somme while the Third Army, under the leadership of General Edmund Allenby advanced north of Rawlinson. At the same time, south of the Somme, the French Army, under the command of General Ferdinand Foch attempted to hold the German forces in their present position. Transgression emerged, not because of what was destroyed, but because of what was revealed.

Although the British experienced 60,000 casualties, the destruction revealed was not the litter of dead and wounded upon the fields of battle, but the apparent revelation for many, and particularly Borden, was an overwhelming defeat that ushered in the demise of romantic idealism, quest for glory and personal fulfillment that had been the impetus for enlistment and volunteerism by those such as Brooke.

In his study intended to answer the question as to why Germany was more successful than the Allies in killing soldiers, yet ultimately lost the War, John Mosier contends that because the Allied military commands, and particularly the British, maintained absolute control over the news dispatches concerning casualties and deaths,

propaganda dissemination, especially during 1916, was a function of the military rather than the state.<sup>20</sup> The locus of propaganda in the hands of the individual--military commanders--rather than the state was reflected upon by David Lloyd George in his memoir of the War years.

The reports passed on to the ministers were, as well realized much later, grossly misleading. Victories were much overstated. Virtual defeats were represented as victories, however limited their scope. Our casualties were understated. Enemy losses became pyramidal. That was the way the military authorities presented the situation to Ministers--that was their active propaganda in the Press. All disconcerting and discouraging facts were suppressed in the reports received from the front by the War Cabinet--every bright feather of success was waved and flourished in our faces.<sup>21</sup>

Although Haig endeavored to put a positive spin on the first day of the Somme losses by reporting that the Germans were getting mowed down and their casualties were at least equal,<sup>22</sup> British soldiers transferred to the field hospitals related a far different story. Nurses on the front responded to official military casualty reports with an anger directed toward revealing a more accurate portrayal of the unequal massacre as well as the transgressive nature of the reports. Mary Borden's *The Forbidden Zone*, discussed in Chapter Four, provides apt examples of Kucich's definition of transgression as that found in secrecy and lying with the attendant ability to create reversal and inversion, as well as Foucault's discussion of the manner in which transgression is violent, not because of destruction, but because of revelation. The limit or boundary transgressed on July 1, 1916 and the manner in which that transgression reveals an inversion or upheaval of previous beliefs created a new territory on the war front landscape.

As summer turned to fall and then to winter, political unrest in Britain, France and Russia created crises in the Allied camps. While Russia was dealing with civilian and military unrest in January 1917 and Germany ordered unrestricted submarine warfare, the United States broke diplomatic relations with Germany. America now emerged from its often-perceived position of neutrality. On April 6, 1917, after an 82 to 6 vote in the Senate, the House voted 373 to 50 to support the President, and the nation was at war.<sup>23</sup> One boundary had been transgressed, but a new one appeared--the boundary of the propaganda of exclusion.

Propaganda frequently relies upon our insecurities and anxieties to accomplish its aims. In 1917, as the United States began drafting and training young men into its Army for disembarkment to France, anxiety over the role of African-American men in the Army became a focal point of debate for northern and southern draft boards in the United States. Governmentally scripted and administered intelligence testing became one vehicle implemented in a propaganda of exclusion designed to maintain the lines of separation between the black and white races stateside and in France after October 1917. Alice Dunbar-Nelson's play *Mine Eyes Have Seen* and her poem "I Sit and Sew" are included in this study because of the manner in which they reflect the fears, anxieties and hostilities of many black Americans who were victims of a disinformation common to propaganda.

The prevalence of segregation, lynchings and disenfranchisement of African-Americans in the years following the American Civil War spawned major concerns when the United States instituted conscription in 1917. The heavily southern-dominated Wilson Administration fervently supported the army's stance on racially segregated units, and

allowed only eight black combat regiments. Between volunteerism and conscription, 380,000 African-Americans served in the Army, eighty-nine percent of which were assigned to labor units and the remaining eleven percent to two combat divisions. Black soldiers served mainly in labor units and were totally excluded from any specialized fields, such as aviation. Although W. E. B DuBois encouraged African-American men to join the Army to obtain the full rights of citizenship, relatively few young black men were given commissions as officers. In spite of riots and protests, the most notable of which occurred in Houston in August 1917, segregation within the military was the norm even after 1941 when the passage of Executive Order 8802, which prohibited racial discrimination in defense-related industries, was effected.<sup>24</sup>

In his analysis of Soviet propaganda apparatus, Ladislav Bittman discussed the relationship between disinformation and verifiable information, which is applicable to the exclusionary practices levied against black American soldiers and nurses on the Western Front.

To succeed, every disinformation message must at least partially correspond to reality or generally accepted views, especially when an intended victim is a seasoned veteran of such propaganda practices. Without a considerable degree of plausible verifiable information it is difficult to gain the victim's confidence.<sup>25</sup>

The literature of Alice Dunbar-Nelson, included in Chapter Six, is representative of this propaganda of exclusion that is a boundary ultimately transgressed by the all-black 369<sup>th</sup> Regiment--the Harlem Hellfighters--whose distinction as the only American regiment to be decorated by the French is chronicled in Bill Miles's 1986 film, *Men of Bronze: The Black American Heroes of World War I*, a documentary on the history of this

regiment that is exceptional in the manner in which it uses a great deal of actual combat footage.

In both wartime and peace, there is often a tendency to deny, distort, revise, and revamp our individual and collective histories. Indeed, the myths emerging from the total World War I experience to which Paul Fussell addresses the majority of *The Great War and Modern Memory* had such an effect upon American cultural perceptions that memories of the way in which widespread and exaggerated stories concerning the purported atrocities against the people of Belgium at the hands of the Germans during 1914 and 1915 led many public and private citizens to regard the initial stories of German holocaust camps during World War II to be without merit.<sup>26</sup> This continuation of the myth, the propaganda of the marauding beast, is a territory transgressed over and over again in our twentieth-century literature. The five writers I have included in this study each present a type of propaganda that calls for a response from the individual to the individual, a response that requires each person, through free will and independence of thought and deed, to transcend any perceived personal or state-imposed boundaries and respond to the dictates of conscience and self.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup>Stanley Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda: A Reconstruction* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>As pointed out by experts in the field, “a veritable plethora of definitions” of propaganda greet today’s writer. While some scholars regard the defining element of as secrecy or concealment, and others “stress the emotional as opposed to the intellectual appeal of propaganda,” it generally is agreed that the term concerns itself with directing

and influencing opinion. Nicholas J. Cull, David Culbert, and David Welch, *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Oxford: ABC-Clio, 2003), p. 38.

<sup>4</sup>Cunningham., p. 16.

<sup>5</sup>David Culbert, "Propaganda and Public Relations, Government" in *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, ed. John Whiteclay Chambers II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 572.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph T. Shipley, *Dictionary of Word Origins* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 285.

<sup>7</sup>Culbert, p. 572.

<sup>8</sup>The British authors in attendance at the meeting of September 2, 1914 were William Archer, Sir James M. Barrie, Arnold Bennett, A. C. Benson, Robert Bridges, Hall Caine, G. K. Chesterton, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy, Thomas Hardy, Anthony Hope Hawkins, Maurice Hewlett, W. J. Locke, E. V. Lucas, J. W. Mackail, John Masefield, A. E. W. Mason, Gilbert Murray, Sir Henry Newbolt, Sir Gilbert Parker, Sir Owen Seaman, George Trevelyan, H. G. Wells, Israel Zangwill and assorted government officials. Rudyard Kipling and Sir Arthur Woullter Couch were unable to attend but sent messages assuring they would contribute to the effort in any manner requested. Lucy Masterman, *C. F. G. Masterman* (London: Cassells, 1939), p. 272.

<sup>9</sup>Fussell, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup>Paul Fussell, as well as Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald, have perpetuated a belief that all British and American soldiers in World War I were so permanently and adversely affected by the relentlessly harsh conditions in the trenches and on the battlefields that, if they survived, they were destined to lead unproductive and shattered lives in isolation and despair. However, this generalization of the broken and socially catatonic veteran is not only repudiated by Cather, but also by contemporary historians. In the Introduction to his 1998 analysis of World War I, *The Pity of War*, Niall Ferguson offers that even though the War "remains the worst thing the people of [his] country have ever had to endure [and] to survive it was to be mysteriously fortunate," his grandfather did indeed return home and, from all outward appearances, enjoyed a seemingly normal life. He worked at a small export house, raised a family and ultimately started a successful business. Ferguson states that the only negative residual of his grandfather's War experience was the chain-smoking of cigarettes, a habit he had developed in the trenches. Ferguson concludes, "He seems to have been able to live, in other words, quite normally. In this, of course, he resembled the great majority of men who fought in the war." Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. xxi.

<sup>11</sup>Fussell, pp. 8-35.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. ix.

<sup>13</sup>In his discussion of how the portrayal of World War I in drama and television documentaries since 1964 has affected our historical understanding of the War, Stephen Badsey points out that Fussell has been criticized for “his lack of rigor . . . but the persistence of his influence, and the continued strength of approach to the First World War through literature and cultural artifacts, has contributed greatly to historical understanding.” Stephen Badsey, “*The Great War Since The Great War*,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22:1 (March 2002): 43.

<sup>14</sup>When Lord Kitchener was appointed Secretary for War in August 1914, one of his chief aims was to persuade men to join the British Army as conscription had not yet been instituted in Great Britain. Sir Henry Rawlinson suggested that men might be willing to enlist if they were to serve with friends from their own towns or social or occupational circles. Rawlinson inquired of a close friend, Robert White, if he might be able to raise a battalion of men who worked in London. White subsequently opened a recruiting office on Throckmorton Street and within the first two hours of its existence, 210 City workers joined the Army. Six days later, the Stockbrokers’ Battalion, as it became known, was 1,600 men strong. As civic leaders in other cities heard about the Stockbrokers’ Battalion, recruitment offices immediately sprang up. It was Lord Edward Derby, who organized the Liverpool Battalion, and coined the term “pals battalions” to describe men who had been locally recruited. One of the most celebrated Pals Battalions was the Accrington Pals, a group of friends from the town of Accrington who distinguished itself on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. Out of 720 Accrington Pals who took part in the attack of July 1, 1916, 584 were killed, wounded or missing. A short distance from Serre Road Cemetery No. 1 near Serre village, a slightly overgrown track of a road meanders through the rolling fields of the Somme Salient and leads to Sheffield Memorial Park. The road passes before Serre Road No. 3 Cemetery as it parallels the British front line of 1916. Here remains the hint of the front line trench from which the Accrington Pals attacked. Slightly to the left of the trench line is a monument to the Accrington Pals, made out of Accrington brick.

<sup>15</sup>Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *To Arms!* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup>Niall Ferguson argues that a more pressing reason for Britain to enter the war was that the British Cabinet was united by one fear: “the fear of letting in the Conservative and Unionist opposition.” The Liberals’ stance in favor of Home Rule for Ireland had incensed Unionists as Ulster Protestants began to arm themselves “to prevent the imposition of ‘Rome Rule.’” The possibility of civil war was real and the attitude of leading Tories, to say nothing of senior army officers, was not unsympathetic to the

Protestant cause. The sudden onset of the European diplomatic crisis served, as Asquith remarked, to pour oil on the stormy Irish waters (that was the ‘one bright spot in this hateful war’); but at the same time it gave the Tories a new stick with which to beat the government.” Conservative leadership regarded the German threat of invasion more seriously than most Liberal ministers. The Tory viewpoint on August 2, 1914 was that any delay in supporting France and Russia “would be fatal to the honour and future security of the United Kingdom,” and that any hesitation on the part of the Liberal government to render that support would result in the Conservatives “stepping into Liberal shoes.” Such an event would result in the resignation of a majority of the Cabinet and establish a war ministry that would be less anxious for an ultimately honorable and peaceful resolution to the German threat. Winston Churchill was prepared to defect if proponents of neutrality remained in power and had secretly inquired of the Opposition if, “in the event of up to eight resignations, [they] would be prepared to rescue the Government . . . by forming a Coalition to fill up the vacant offices.” The decision to dispatch the British Expeditionary Forces was not so much in response to Germany’s threat to Belgium as it was Germany’s threat to Britain in its present political climate if France fell. Any change in the government would threaten Britain’s security. Niall Ferguson, pp. 164-167.

<sup>17</sup>David L. Alltheide and John M. Johnson, *Bureaucratic Propaganda* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980), pp. 21, 23.

<sup>18</sup>Cunningham, p. 73.

<sup>19</sup>Michel Foucault, “A Preface to Transgression” in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 34.

<sup>20</sup>John Mosier, *The Myth of the Great War: A New Military History of World War I* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), p. 9.

<sup>21</sup>David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (London: Odhams, 1938), 2:1313.

<sup>22</sup>Mosier, p. 242.

<sup>23</sup>S. L. A. Marshall, *World War I* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 281.

<sup>24</sup>John Sibley Butler, “African Americans in the Military” *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 8.

<sup>25</sup>Ladislav Bittman. *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation* (Washington, DC: Pergamon Brassey, 1985), p. 49.



<sup>26</sup>In her study of how photographs taken at the time of the liberation of various concentration camps in Germany shape our memory of the Holocaust, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye*, Barbie Zelizer states, "The exaggerated nature of the World War I atrocity story set in place an aura of fakery that greeted the initial reports of the atrocities in World War II. In fact, the resemblance of later atrocity reports to the false World War I atrocity stories generated such skepticism that until proven true, atrocity reports were assumed false; they were regarded first as narratives of exaggeration and propaganda and only later as potentially credible accountings of the ravages of war." Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 31.

## Table of Contents

Dedication . . . . .	ii
Acknowledgments . . . . .	iii
Preface . . . . .	vii
List of Tables . . . . .	xxvi
Abstract . . . . .	xxvii
Chapter One - Introduction . . . . .	1
Chapter Two - Rupert Brooke and the Cultural Community of Purpose . . . . .	16
Chapter Three - Dorothy Canfield Fisher: Propaganda of the Maternal and the Domestic in <i>Home Fires in France</i> . . . . .	57
Chapter Four - Transgression and Transection in the Forbidden Zone . . . . .	100
Chapter Five - Conscription, Patriotism, and the Propaganda of Racial Exclusion . . . . .	139
Chapter Six - Negating the Distance Between Home and War in Willa Cather's <i>One of Ours</i> . . . . .	177
Conclusion . . . . .	214
Bibliography . . . . .	223
Appendix A - Alfred Leete, <i>Join Your Country's Army</i> , 1914. . . . .	233
Appendix B - E. V. Kealy, <i>Women of Britain Say - "GO!"</i> . . . . .	234
Appendix C - James Montgomery Flagg, <i>I Want You</i> , 1917 . . . . .	235
Appendix D - Carl Rakeman, <i>Five Thousand by June</i> , 1917 . . . . .	236
Appendix E - Laura Brey, <i>On Which Side of the Window Are You?</i> , 1917 . . . . .	237
Appendix F - Charles Gustrine, <i>True Sons of Freedom</i> , 1918 . . . . .	238
Vita . . . . .	239

## **List of Tables**

1. Alpha Test Scores for Southern White and Northern Black Draftees . 148

## **Abstract**

*“Above the Noise and the Glory:” Tiers of Propaganda in Great War Literature* illuminates the literary responses of Rupert Brooke, Mary Borden, Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Willa Cather to the manner in which the threat to one’s cultural community, as well as personal and physical landscape, transforms a nation’s, and even a world’s, people from a state of complacency or purposelessness to one of jingoistic fervor. Prompted and inspired by personal, political and cultural forces, these writers mobilized early twentieth-century private citizens’ spirits of nationalistic pride and solidarity. Individual chapters place within historical and literary contexts how war propaganda, particularly British and American propaganda from 1914 to 1919, is composed of four stages, each stage choreographed to produce a certain response within the individual. Brooke, Borden, Dunbar-Nelson and Cather, through their writing and active involvement both on the war and home fronts, enter the domain of war in all four stages of the propaganda cycles constructed herein by superimposing a domestic landscape onto a military landscape. In individually defining as well as responding to modes of propaganda, which originated in World War I, but still persist today, these writers are vital to our understanding of how literature not only reflects our history, but shapes it as well.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

There has been a great carving of human flesh  
which was of our boyhood while the old men  
directed their sacrifice and the profiteers grew  
rich and the fires of hate were stoked up at  
patriotic banquets and in editorial chairs.

-----Philip Gibbs

In the weeks before September 11, 2001, one would be hard pressed to find any widespread flying of American flags from the porches of private homes and automobile antennas. Such outward signs of perceived nationalistic pride, coupled with the donning of red, white and blue-striped Walmart tee shirts by men and women for whom both stripes and Walmart remained fundamentally alien, were activities reserved almost exclusively for Independence Day. And for America's youth to unabashedly proclaim jingoistic fervor was something only Boy Scouts or ROTC students might consider. But, as the first war of the twenty-first century erupted with the attack on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the crash of American Airlines flight 93 in a rural field in western Pennsylvania, all Americans, regardless of national origin, responded to an inner and outer voice of patriotism. What subtle or perhaps not so subtle impetus transforms a nation's people from a state of disinterested complacency to one of jingoistic fervor? The answer lies in the way in which the threat to one's cultural community, as well as personal and physical landscape, is invaded by the risk or actual presence of war.

War propaganda, often originating within and disseminating through a literature of purpose and persuasion, is composed of four stages, each stage choreographed to produce a certain response within the individual. Stage One is designed to raise the citizen's spirit

of nationalistic pride and solidarity with the end result of volunteerism. The individual perceives his landscape as either physically or ideologically tenuous when the invasion of another is internalized and transformed into an elaborate sense of empathy. Here volunteerism is not so much an act of altruism, but the individual's conviction that the act of volunteering gives purpose to a life otherwise devoid of direction or worth.

Stage Two builds upon the individual's intellectual and emotional response to the perceived threat of the outsider invading the personal and physical landscape. It provokes the citizen to respond to the call to arms, by both volunteering and committing one's own self and resources to the war effort, or volunteering to persuade others to do so.

Third stage propaganda surfaces when the number of war casualties has become so great, and the war itself so politically, ideologically and even economically unpopular due to the costs in human life, suffering and sacrifice, that the call to respond no longer is from the state to the individual, but from the individual to the state. The private citizen, and often the soldier participant, begins to question the morality, effectiveness and human and economic costs of the war, which often result in war front mutinies and home front revolution. The individual now questions the practices of the state and, if such questioning is persistent, constructs a new national identity, such as occurred in 1917 in Russia.

Ultimately, war propaganda comes full circle in the fourth stage as it endeavors to reconcile the primal propaganda of purpose with that of the more recent propaganda of protest. This rhetoric of reconciliation and healing often does not develop until the bitterness occasioned by the toll of casualties that war exacts is overridden by the public's

desire and need to construct heroes whose purpose it seems is to justify an otherwise unjustifiable carving of human flesh.

War is by its very nature a male-dominated arena, but women have historically entered its domain in all four stages of the propaganda cycles by superimposing the domestic landscape onto the military one. World War I created a new public image and presence for women in the United States and in Europe as they not only assumed the occupations and positions vacated by thousands of men who enlisted or were drafted into military service, but also volunteered themselves for jobs in the medical, social and welfare positions on both the home and war fronts. Their roles in the creation of this theatre of war, and the ardent manner in which they served and informed others of the need for, and even the ramifications of that service, produced a literature of war, a literature of purpose, a literature of propaganda.

The definitive origins of World War I remain a diverse and debatable area of study for historians; however, what remains relatively safe to aver is that World War I officially began in the summer of 1914 with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria by a young Serbian rebel, Gavrilo Princip, in Sarajevo. When the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, this first global war of the twentieth century mobilized over sixty-five million men from sixteen countries, eight million of whom died directly in battle while another twenty-one million were wounded. Over six and one-half million war-related civilian deaths added to the total carnage count, over half of which occurred in Russia and Turkey.<sup>1</sup> Another twenty million citizens fell victim to the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918, most of whom were women and children whose immune systems had

been weakened by the shortages of food, fuel and clothing that home-front economy for war-front giving had produced.

“The war to end all wars” not only spelled death and destruction for millions of individuals, but also heralded the demise of political orders. The war caused the weakening of the Russian, Hapsburg, German and Ottoman empires and created new social and political structures where previously there had been none. And for the young republic of the United States, which lost relatively few of its citizens in the war effort, the first global conflict was the genesis of its emergence as a great world power. Although the immediate postwar years were ones in which many Americans preferred to be left alone in relative seclusion and isolation, the four-year period of 1914 to 1918 saw a spirit of unparalleled volunteerism and mobilization of the domestic front, here recorded as beginning in England in 1914 and ending in New York City in 1918 when the boys came (and sometimes did not come) home.

Histories of war, and the rhetoric that records conflict, generally focus on combat. The language of war tends to be a male-dominated one that speaks of encounters and assaults, barrages and bombardments, artillery and fields of fire, and emphasizes that the battle line separates not only enemies from each other, but, more pointedly, the realm of the male battlefield from the female home front. In his relatively recent and bland study of World War I and the British home front, Samuel Hynes argues that distinctions between male and female arenas of action and discourse are mutually exclusive and instill in women a bona fide feeling of inferiority and disempowerment.

War - any war - is for women an inevitably diminishing experience. There is nothing like a war for demonstrating to



women their inferior status, nothing like the war experience of men for making clear the exclusion of women from life's great excitements, nothing like war casualties for imposing on women the guiltiness of being alive and well.<sup>2</sup>

But war, for most women and particularly British women, was anything but “diminishing.” As Great Britain sent thousands of men to camp in August and September 1914, vacated jobs in factories, schools, post offices, railways and telegraph offices were filled by women who were responding to a new found sense of purpose. Women of all social strata uncovered a sense of being and fulfillment in the early days of the war, as depicted in the 1974 PBS series *Upstairs, Downstairs*, which examined women's work during the war. In the upstairs domain, women discarded the prior meaningless society life for a purposeful one of volunteer nursing and relief work, while downstairs female servants felt the pull of abandoning domestic work for the higher wages promised in the factories.

By 1916, thousands of British women had responded to their country's need for their services by enlisting in Queen Mary's Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) or the Volunteer Aid Detachment (VAD), working as cooks, farmers, drivers, prison guards and munition workers. And hundreds of women volunteered their time as propagandists in the white feather campaigns. During the early days of the war, white feathers symbolized unpatriotic or cowardly young men who shirked their duty to join the military machine. Erika Kuhlman points out, “it was female patriots--not soldierly doughboys--who paraded through city streets distributing white feathers to male bystanders not in uniform.”<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, every English woman who was able found an individual purpose in the war effort that hitherto had been absent in her life. But the English citizen who unequivocally represents the attainment of self-fulfillment and purpose in war is Rupert Brooke, whose war sonnets of 1914 remain the undisputed quintessential literature of first stage war propaganda--the propaganda of purpose.

Chapter Two of this study examines the manner in which the outbreak of war often ignites the spark of purpose within the individual, such as Brooke, who feels a sense of alienation and lack of purpose in a world where well-to-do university scholars rank poorly in such a landscape where the individual is nothing more than a part of a vast machine. The need and desire to belong, to be a part of the big show, produces a decision to enlist, not so much prompted by the propaganda of the state needing the individual, but rather the individual's need and desire to do what he believes is morally and politically expedient to protect his personal landscape or cultural community, and to feel he serves a function in the emerging landscape of war.

The overarching theme in Brooke's five war sonnets is moral purpose and the sacrifices inherent in honoring one's commitment to such a purpose. Under this unifying theme, one quickly gains a sense of a particular sub theme in each of the individual poems. For example, Brooke's first sonnet, "Peace," is a prayer of thanksgiving for the bestowing of the benefit that gives meaning to one's existence. The truly moral person will defend what is worth defending, and in the defense itself, a sense of peace, an emergence of purpose and reason for being, even in light of the threat of mayhem and slaughter, unfolds.

If acting upon one's moral purpose affords the individual a sense of peace, how does the individual achieve, and subsequently maintain, a permanent sphere of safety when disagreeing with the majority? In the second of his war sonnets, "Safety," Brooke asserts that war, like death, possesses a magnitude of power only to the degree the individual allows it to possess. It is when one "has gained a peace unshaken by pain for ever"<sup>4</sup> that the tested man can emerge "safe though all safety's lost." Brooke's war sonnets, when read in concert with his most accomplished poem, "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester," reflect the fear the emerging propagandist experiences when war threatens the native landscape. Such fear gives rise to a sense of directed purposefulness where previously only complacency abided. The peace obtained in finding or establishing one's personal worth and meaning renders the propagandist safe in the midst of a landscape where all safety is seemingly lost. At this juncture, the aim of the literary propagandist is, in effect, to persuade an ambivalent audience to believe his message that protecting and defending one's native landscape from a perceived threat will infuse within the walking dead of youth a spirit of life with purpose.

In September 1914, Brooke obtained a commission in the Royal Naval Division together with his long-time dear friend and fellow Rugby classmate Denis Browne. By October 1, they were assigned to the Anson Battalion and embarked on a brief and unsuccessful expedition to Antwerp. The failed expedition and the plight of the Belgian refugees profoundly affected Brooke, as evidenced in his letter to his lover, Cathleen Nesbitt, under date of 17 October 1914.

The sky was lit by burning villages and houses; and after a bit  
we got to the land by the river, where the Belgians had let all

the petrol out of the tanks and fired it. Rivers and seas of flame leaping up hundreds of feet, crowned by black smoke that covered the entire heavens. It lit up houses wrecked by shells, dead horses, demolished railway stations, engines that had been taken up with their lines and signals, and all twisted round and pulled out, as a bad child spoils a toy. And there were joined the refugees, with all their goods on barrows and carts, in a double line, moving forward about a hundred yards an hour, white and drawn and beyond emotion. The glare was hell . . . We went on through the dark. The refugees and motor-buses and transports and Belgian troops grew thicker. After about a thousand years it was dawn.<sup>5</sup>

So profoundly did this vision of thousands of Belgian refugees fleeing their homeland affect Brooke that he believed it was everyone's duty to serve in the great cause. In a letter to Nesbitt in November 1914, he sought to enlist her talents in the war effort, if not in Belgium, then in England.

If you were a man, there'd be no excuse for you to go on acting. You'd be despicable. You'd make a good nurse, and a good lady with the Belgians, I know well . . . I'm rather disturbed, my dear one, about the way people in general don't realize we're at war. It's - even yet - such a picnic for us - for the nation - and so different for France and Belgium. The millions France is sacrificing to our thousands. I think - I know - that *everyone* ought to go in.<sup>6</sup> (emphasis in original)

But Cathleen Nesbitt did not 'go in,' neither as a nurse nor as one who would actively or tacitly support the war effort. But Brooke's near glamorization of war and rhetoric of self-sacrifice for the love of "honour, holiness, love and pain" was not lost on Dorothy Canfield Fisher.

The war for Americans in 1915 and 1916 was an abstraction as the possibility of an invaded American landscape remained remote. Chapter Three looks at the manner in which Dorothy Canfield Fisher sought to increase an awareness of the plight of Belgian

and French women and children by appealing to the emotional and intellectual manner in which Americans would respond if placed in the same circumstances. Responding to the invasion of Belgium by the Germans, in the fall of 1915, Fisher, with her two children, traveled to France to join her husband who had volunteered for the American Ambulance Corps in France. Her firsthand experiences of the war in France and Belgium served as the basis for her wartime stories, contained in *Home Fires in France*.

Whereas Brooke believed that sacrifice for an ideal gave meaning to an otherwise meaningless life, Fisher's wartime volunteer efforts were to bring to the attention of an American audience the process through which sacrifice and heroism transforms the French or Belgian women "from being just nice home-keepers into being guardians of the public weal."<sup>7</sup> Such a transformation is accomplished, as the story "La Pharmacienne" suggests, when the domestic landscape, having been invaded by the outsider, is superimposed upon the landscape of war. Fisher's purpose in volunteering as a war relief worker in France and Belgium, and in recording her experiences in *Home Fires in France*, was to provide the American people with concrete and actual representations of the conditions of war. In a letter to her publisher, Henry Holt, quoted in the preface to the book, Fisher said, "What I write is about such very well-known conditions to us that it is hard to remember that it may be fresh to you, but it is so far short of the actual conditions that it seems pretty pale, after all."<sup>8</sup>

Through informing an American audience of French and Belgian cultural history and eradicating existing biases against the French held by some New Englanders, Fisher was successful in calling upon the ordinary American to respond to the plight of French

and Belgian women and children. This success in increasing the level of volunteerism and economic resources by making one responsive to the invasion of another's landscape because of the emotional and intellectual fear he or she may be a future victim of is the very essence of second stage propaganda. *Home Fires in France*, in the manner in which it turns the abstraction of war in France and Belgium into a very concrete experience demanding American support through relief work volunteerism, is the literary embodiment of stage two propaganda.

July 1, 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, remains the most disastrous day in all of British military history. John Keegan reports:

When, in the days that followed, the 200 British battalions that had attacked began to count the gaps in their ranks, the realisation came that, of the 100,000 men who had entered no man's land, 20,000 had not returned; another 40,000 who had been got back were wounded. In summary, a fifth of the attacking force was dead, and some battalions, such as the 1<sup>st</sup> Newfoundland Regiment, had ceased to exist.<sup>9</sup>

The Battle of the Somme "marked the end of an age of vital optimism"<sup>10</sup> and the advent of third stage literary propaganda, which calls into question the morality and effectiveness of war. By the end of 1917, soldiers in the French and Russian armies were mutinying and the Allied forces seemed to be on the brink of a universal state of collapse and breakdown. The fourth chapter of this study of war and literary propaganda, "Transgression and Transection in the Forbidden Zone," demonstrates how the hitherto noble and purposeful emphasis in propaganda breaks down in light of mounting casualties and eroding confidence in political leaders and generals. The intent of a propaganda that emerges in response to a growing public awareness of and disenchantment with the myth

of war as ennobling and sanctifying becomes one that seeks to reveal the one-dimensional nature of first and second stage propaganda. The ritualistic and mythological discourse found in the paternalistic language of earlier propaganda is seen as wholly deceptive.

Mary Borden's war sketches, collected in *The Forbidden Zone*, explode the myth of war as romantic and purposeful by inverting previously established and accepted social and cultural beliefs. Soldiers are now part of the domestic landscape, often represented as loaves of bread or clothing in need of mending. Borden's "forbidden zone" is that domestic landscape within which the romanticized and gloriously purposeful vision of war is transformed into a graphic reality where soldiers are converted into so many parts, dislocated from a recognizable whole. Soldiers are no longer golden deities; they are now only parts and pieces of what used to be. And women, the caretakers of the domestic, emerge as the soldiers who fight "on the second battlefield" to preserve what remains of man. Borden's literary aim, succinctly representative of third stage propaganda, is to present a realism that prompts her reader to question if the reason and rationale for war is worth the price paid in disillusioned and disjointed men. War renders the individual a divided self, an inverted and unstable representation of the former being. Borden's characterization of soldiers as inanimate parts of a domestic or feminine, rather than military or masculine, landscape reflects the political and social inversions occurring in a world where civilian disillusionment and weariness in the military ranks were creating mutinies and revolutions.

Civilian disillusionment with and questioning of the morality of participating in a war that seemed too costly for the benefits being realized were not feelings known only by

those actually participating in the battles being waged in Europe. When the United States entered the war in April 1917, black Americans, such as Alice Dunbar-Nelson, experienced the propaganda of exclusion. Chapter Five sets forth the manner in which governmental intelligence testing results were often skewed to eliminate or limit black Americans from serving as officers, medics, transcribers and intelligence personnel in the United States Army. Dunbar-Nelson's poem "I Sit and Sew" responds to the propaganda of excluding black women from serving as nurses because of the claim of an allegedly inferior program of training offered in black nursing schools. A war poem in response to the exclusion of black women in the field of nursing, "I Sit and Sew" questions the morality of a nation at war which allows its soldiers to die due to lack of adequate nursing care when thousands of black nurses are excluded from service.

In 1918, Alice Dunbar-Nelson's only play, "Mine Eyes Have Seen," was published in *The Crisis*. Described as her initial foray into penning literature with a purpose, the play's greater import was the manner in which it raised the awareness of the relationship between race and national identity. The question was not so much whether or not black Americans should enlist, but rather the problem of how a nation ultimately defines itself when it practices segregation and discrimination, yet presents to the world an all-inclusive expression of nationalistic solidarity and resolve. Whereas Borden's sketches reflect the manner in which the individual questions the morality and human costs of a war that reduces men to just so many disjointed parts, Dunbar-Nelson's literature of third stage exclusionary propaganda indicts a nation, not a war, which



discriminates and segregates so egregiously that men and women are cast aside, even when the need for participation is great.

Within a decade after the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, British cemeteries could be found from the North Sea to the Somme Salient to Verdun. Over one million British young men had died along with 1,700,000 French, 1,500,000 from the Habsburg Empire, two million Germans, 460,000 Italians, 1,700,000 Russians and hundreds of thousands of Turks.<sup>12</sup> The war claimed thirteen percent of all men born between 1870 and 1899, and for those men born between 1892 and 1895, who would have been between the ages of 19 and 22, thirty five percent would perish as a result of war-related disease or injury. World War I united a world in grief, remorse, reflection and confusion.

Although disillusionment is the most overworked of adjectives depicting the postwar novel of a generation lost and adrift in a world that seemed but a sham, some writers, and chief among them Willa Cather, sought to establish a reconciliation between the propagandas of purpose and volunteerism and that of protest and discrimination. Chapter Six establishes how Cather's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *One of Ours*, is instructive in understanding how the immediate postwar American years gave birth to new myths whose purpose seemed to be designed to make sense of the incomprehensible scale of carnage. Whereas Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and John Dos Passos endeavored to deconstruct the myth of the soldier as a crucified Christ, Cather sought to memorialize not only the spent soldier, but the disillusioned and reflective civilian as well. War for Cather is not only a vehicle for discovering self purpose and worth for the soldier,

but a state of being that creates a feeling within the civilian that war is an initial glorious calling that cannot, because of its inherent violence and demand for sacrifice, survive.

Rupert Brooke, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Mary Borden, Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Willa Cather were not only writers of literary merit and note, but also propagandists who attempted to influence their readers by leading each one to think and respond in a carefully constructed and directed fashion, all the while making such a response seem like the individual's own conclusion. Reaching out to a public often dazed and confused by a war that seemed to be one of only attrition, these writers shaped the attitudes of a people who desperately sought purpose in a purposeless European exercise that made widows of out wives, orphans out of children, and corpses out of vibrant young men. Through emotional appeals, myths of a marauding Teutonic beast on the loose, and linking war volunteerism to the goals of various social, political and ethnic groups, these five Great War writers shaped and molded the attitudes and beliefs of a world grown old and cold and weary. They are the architects of a propaganda that began with a belief that participation in the Great War served no selfish end, no desire for conquest or domination, but ended with the sad realization that we can never be the champion of the rights of mankind until we understand that we must seek to include *all* mankind in such a noble purpose and not merely those who bear resemblance to ourselves. These five writers of the Great War experience lead us through the stages of propaganda that appear to come full circle and lead us back to the very stage where we began.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Figures available for war-related civilian deaths in the Allied countries are: France 40,000, British Empire 30,633, Russian 2,000,000, Belgium 30,000, Serbia

650,000, Romania 275,000, and Greece 132,000. Civilian losses for the Central Powers have been reported as follows: Germany 760,000, Austria-Hungary 300,000, Turkey 2,150,000 (which includes the Armenian victims of massacre), and Bulgaria 275,000.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1990), p. 379.

<sup>3</sup> Erika A. Kuhlman, *Petticoats and White Feathers: Gender Conformity, Race, the Progressive Peace Movement, and the Debate Over War, 1895-1919* (Westport (CT)): Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Rupert Brooke, *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke* (New York: John Lane, Company, 1915), p. 108.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey Keynes, ed. *The Letters of Rupert Brooke* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1968), pp. 624-25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 630.

<sup>7</sup> Ida H. Washington, *Dorothy Canfield Fisher: A Biography* (Shelburne (VT): New England Press, 1982), p. 159.

<sup>8</sup> Dorothy Canfield Fisher, *Home Fires in France* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1918), p. v.

<sup>9</sup> John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), p. 295.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>11</sup> John Kucich, *The Power of Lies: Transgression in Victorian Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 128.

<sup>12</sup> Keegan, p. 423.

## Chapter Two

### Rupert Brooke and the Cultural Community of Purpose

There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity  
under heaven. . .  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.  
--*Ecclesiastes*

On Monday, August 3, 1914, Rupert Brooke's twenty-seventh birthday, Albert, King of Belgium, appealed to King George of Great Britain for diplomatic support of his country's neutrality. Germany had occupied neutral Luxembourg and issued an ultimatum to Belgium demanding that its troops be allowed to advance unhindered through Belgian territories to thwart a French attack on Germany. When the Belgian government rejected the German ultimatum, Britain responded with its own edict that either Germany halt its invasion of Belgium, or Britain would be at war by midnight. That afternoon, in an address to the British House of Commons, Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey prophetically stated, "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime." As Big Ben tolled the hour of midnight, a mobilization order, published in the name of King George V, proclaimed:

Owing to the state of Public Affairs and the demands upon Our Naval Forces for the protection of the Empire, an occasion has arisen for ordering . . . and direct[ing] that Volunteers [under the Naval Reserve Act of 1900] shall be called into actual service . . . and the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty give directions as may seem necessary or proper calling out all or any of the said Volunteers as the occasion may require.<sup>1</sup>

Britain was the only major European power that did not invoke some form of conscription in August 1914. Its regular army was an all-volunteer one that consisted at

the outset of approximately 100,000 men. Britain's greatest strength was its powerful navy of over 500 ships, but on August 8, Field Marshall Sir Herbert Kitchener, recently ensconced as Secretary of War, summoned volunteers to join the British Army. In a recruitment poster that first appeared on September 5 (Appendix A), Kitchener is posed thrusting an accusatory finger at the viewer above the imperative: "Join Your Country's Army." By September 14, as King Albert launched an attack against the German forces outside Antwerp, 175,000 British recruits responded to Kitchener's proclamation and H. G. Wells' dubbing of the conflict as "The War to End All Wars," by volunteering and entraining in London for the Western Front.

Sir Edward Grey's prophecy that the Great War would extinguish the lamps all over Europe provided not only historical but literary resonance. His choice of the word "lamps" proved auspicious when considering the metaphor in a critical and poetical context. In his definition of poetry and the role of the poet, William Hazlitt expanded upon the established theory of poetry as a mirrored reflection of any object or event by asserting that, like the radiance a lamp casts, such reflection is awash in an emotional or even romantic light.

Neither a mere description of natural objects, nor a mere delineation of natural feelings, however distinct or forcible, constitutes the ultimate end and aim of poetry. The light of poetry is not only a direct but also a reflected light, that while it shows us the object, throws a sparkling radiance on all around it.<sup>2</sup>

Grey's saddening words that the lamps of Europe had been extinguished by the onset of World War I may have referred to political, economic or national realities, but in poetry, the Great War rekindled the Romantic tradition of the poet-speaker's formation of

the self through a series of crises encountered in an inner journey toward self-awareness and redemption. Although the light of the Romantic poets, such as Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Coleridge, seems to reflect “a sparkling radiance” on nature, and thus we tend to regard Romantic poetry as “nature poetry,” the wider reflection is upon a poetry of landscape, and the manner in which the observation and description of an evolving or ever-changing landscape reflects the modes through which the inner self reforms itself, adapting, overcoming and assimilating the events of crisis that serve as mile markers on the journey to self-actualization and redemption. Although Grey’s words appear to carry “a mordantly prophetic requiem for peace,”<sup>3</sup> the inherent apocalyptic nature of war as a battle royal between the forces of good and evil is played out for the poet, such as Rupert Brooke, not only on the geographical landscape of a physical arena, but, more specifically and importantly, on the inner personal landscape of the individual’s being and soul. Thus, as many Romantic writers sought to create a fusion between the quest for tranquility or joy and the external landscape or world, so too did Brooke view war not so much as an event that creates secular and spiritual crisis, but rather one that allows the individual to proceed past conflict to that place where a peaceful or purposeful personal landscape flourishes.

Before the poet can arrive at that point where a spirit of tranquility or inner peace bathes the soul in both reflection and radiance, conflict, or what Coleridge called “spontaneous impulse and voluntary purpose,”<sup>4</sup> must result. Often this conflict involves an inner war between desire and duty, and the function of war propaganda, such as the Kitchener poster of 1914, is to channel personal desire or spontaneous impulse into public

purpose or duty to one's nation or even the grander vision of civilization itself. On August 15, 1914, three days after Britain declared war on Austria-Hungary, in a letter to Lady Eileen Wellesley, Rupert Brooke revealed the personal conflict between impulse and purpose that lies at the heart of much Great War literature.

One grows introspective. I find in myself two natures – not necessarily conflicting, but – different. There's half my heart which is normal & English – what's the word, not quite “good” or “honourable” – “straight,” I think. But the other half is a wanderer and solitary, selfish, unbound and doubtful. Half my heart is of England, the rest is looking for some home I haven't yet found. So, when this war broke, there was a part of my nature and desires that said ‘Let me alone. What's all this bother? I want to work. I've got ends I desire to reach. If I'd wanted to be a soldier I should have been one. But I've found myself other dreams.’ I came to London a few days ago to see what I could do that would be most use. I had a resentment – or the individualist part in me had – against becoming a mere part of a machine. I wanted to use my intelligence. I can't help feeling I've got a brain. I thought there must be some organizing work that demanded intelligence. But, on investigation, there isn't. At least, not for ages. I feel so damnably incapable. I can't fly or drive a car or ride a horse sufficiently well.<sup>5</sup>

Brooke's sense of being of a divided nature reflects the divided nature of Britain itself. Prior to 1914, a British subject lived in a free trade, free enterprise country where the “state” existed only to maintain order. There was no compulsory military service, no experience of university scholars on the front lines of battle, as only the regular forces were expected to do the fighting. The British Proclamation of August 3, 1914 ushered in a new age of modern liberalism wherein the ideal of individualism, or a system of natural liberty espoused by Adam Smith as a state of being in which “every person possesses the greatest liberty compatible with a like liberty for every other,”<sup>6</sup> was thrown into disarray.

A. J. P. Taylor provides a succinct view of the individualistic or liberal character of English society prior to August 1914. “Until 1914 a sensible, law-abiding Englishman could pass through life and hardly notice the existence of the state, beyond the post office and the policeman. Unlike the countries on the European continent, the state did not require its citizens to perform military service. It left the adult citizen alone.”<sup>7</sup>

The liberal or individualistic character of English society prior to August 1914 was now in jeopardy, and its impending passing disrupted not only the public, but also the personal landscape of many upperclass, well-to-do university scholars who, like Brooke, now felt threatened by and incapable in a society that needed men of mechanical and physical, rather than intellectual, prowess. It is at this point in time that the effect of a changing public landscape would, in concert with an ambivalent personal landscape, create an overwhelming sense of alienation and purposelessness. Brooke’s feeling of incapability and frustration was exacerbated by the fact that he had written no new verse since his return from the South Seas three months earlier. His yearlong journey across the United States, Canada, Hawaii and Samoa was designed to restore his physical and mental health, yet any positive recuperation enjoyed was now in jeopardy.

The resumption of the old habits of self-loathing and purposelessness, and the manner in which he allowed old acquaintances to direct his thoughts and actions, particularly the manner in which he allowed his former Cambridge companion Edward Marsh to exert his influence and control over him by utilizing his political connections to secure for Brooke a suitable commission in the Royal Naval Division, appeared to have an overwhelmingly crippling effect upon his poetical expression. Although the outbreak of



war would extinguish the lamps all over Europe, it would soon illuminate the spark of purpose within the poet. As Brooke journeyed from London to Rugby in August 1914 to inform his mother of his decision to enlist, his poetic imagination was rekindled by the images of the English countryside through which he passed and the recollection of those places in Samoa and Fiji in which he had found repose.

The decision to enlist was not so much prompted by the propaganda of the state needing the individual, but rather the individual's need and desire to do what he deemed necessary to protect, or keep intact, his personal landscape or cultural community. Marsh had warned Brooke that the Germans might invade Britain, and Brooke's enlistment was a response to a fear of the pastoral fields surrounding Grantchester being ravaged. In the final chapter of *Letters from America*, through a third person persona, Brooke reveals the reasons for that inner call to arms.

But as he thought "England and Germany," the word "England," seemed to flash like a line of foam. With a sudden tightening of his heart, he realized that there might be a raid on the English coast. He didn't imagine any possibility of it *succeeding*, but only of enemies and warfare on English soil. The idea sickened him. He was immensely surprised to perceive that the actual earth of England held for him a quality which he found in A-, and in a friend's honour, and scarcely anywhere else, a quality which, if he'd ever been sentimental enough to use the word, he'd have called "holiness."<sup>8</sup>

First stage propaganda, which plays upon the individual's fear of threat and invasion of one's own country or immediate landscape, prompted Brooke's voluntary enlistment.

"The Treasure," a preface to the five better known 1914 sonnets which Brooke had initially considered entitling "Unpacking" or "The Store," is noteworthy, not only for its form, but also for its theme. It is a reverse or upside down sonnet. It would seem that

Brooke is attempting to demonstrate that the upheaval of the English social and political strata occasioned by the declaration of war had permeated that most sacrosanct of English poetical forms, the sonnet. Thematically, “The Treasure” is a continuation of “The Great Lover,” in which Brooke catalogs seemingly inconsequential touchstones of life as representations of a platonic ideal. Although Brooke is physically writing in England and contemplating disembarkation to some foreign soil, his thoughts and very being remain connected to a distant land, a past landscape, where the last vestiges of tranquility and peace are found.

Although William Wordsworth remains the dean of poetry of place, having reversed the Neo-Classical modes of poetry inspired by occasion, Brooke fuses the two traditions and creates the poetical motif of Great War literature characterized by poetry and prose equally inspired by occasion or history and landscape or place. This fusion of nostalgic place and specific occasion, or what Binx Bolling in *The Moviegoer*, in likening himself to Brooke, dismisses as “the crap that lies lurking in the English soul . . . an injection of romanticism that nearly killed it,”<sup>9</sup> will later be questioned by post-war American novels such as F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald questions whether the best one can hope to know in any specific time or place is but a series of fleeting moments when a glimpse or tranquil recollection of a person or specific place becomes so overwhelmingly important, yet impossibly unattainable, that its fleeting presence provides such a total transcendence over the realm of the commonplace that a glimmer of the ideal is perceived.

Although William Laskowski contends that “nowhere can the transition between personal and public sentiment be more easily seen than in Brooke’s sonnet ‘The Treasure,’ written in August 1914, and meant to be read with the five 1914 sonnets of ‘1914,’”<sup>10</sup> the images contained in “The Treasure,” as well as the five 1914 war sonnets, all have their origins in recollections of a specific landscape (the fields of Grantchester), inspired by occasion (his return to England in 1914 when rumors of war surfaced).

Given that “The Treasure” was the first poem Brooke wrote after “The Great Lover,” which was inspired by Brooke’s homesickness while in Germany for places and things specifically English, a combined reading of the two poems demonstrates the depth of the two different and dividing natures Brooke had described in the aforementioned letter to Lady Eileen Wellesley. The final eight lines of “The Great Lover” question whether tranquility, or personal freedom, and its attendant comforts, can long endure.

But the best I've known,  
Stays here, and changes, breaks, grows old, is blown  
About the winds of the world, and fades from brains  
Of living men, and dies.

Nothing remains.  
O dear my loves, O faithless, once again  
This one last gift I give: that after men  
Shall known, and later lovers, far-removed,  
Praise you, "All these were lovely"; say, "He loved."

Ultimately Brooke concludes, “nothing remains.” However, by reordering the lines of “The Treasure” into the traditional form of the sonnet, and by continuing “The Great Lover” with the octave of “The Treasure,”

Still may Time hold some golden space  
Where I'll unpack that scented store  
Of song and flower and sky and face,  
And count, and touch, and turn them o'er,

Musing upon them; as a mother, who  
Has watched her children all the rich day through  
Sits, quiet-handed, in the fading light,  
When children sleep, ere night.

Brooke indicates his unpreparedness for the complete mutability of the earthly pleasures he anticipates resulting as he passes through the portal of time before and time after. He reverses his previous contention that “nothing remains” with the prayer that “still may Time hold some golden space / Where I’ll unpack that scented store / Of song and flower and sky and face, / And count, and touch, and turn them o’er.” Like the poetry of Wordsworth, “The Treasure” relates something that is happening at a particular time and in a particular place. The time is August 1914 and the place is the arena of demarcation where Brooke is unpacking or reordering those nostalgic images and personal ideologies of his past civilian life, which will have little or no meaning on the battlefield. “The Treasure” looks to the images of the past and contemplates a time in the future when the old order may be recaptured, but the five 1914 war sonnets center on the present and near future where the tranquility inherent in unburdening oneself of “the lies, and truths and pain” may be realized. This sense of enlistment in war as salvation from a life devoid of purpose is the cornerstone of much pro-war literature of the 1920s and specifically Willa Cather’s *One of Ours*. It builds upon the individual’s fear of the invader to alter personal and public landscape. First stage propaganda, because of its rhetoric of duty and honor, is designed to encourage the individual to see war as one’s divine, if not patriotic, calling, and thus salvation from a world in which the individual is aimlessly drifting.

It is paradoxical that one can find harmony and concordance in the midst of the suffering and death that war exacts, yet Brooke, like Cather’s Claude Williams, in

ultimately discovering what he viewed as a moral purpose, believed that “the central purpose of my life, the aim and end of it, now, the thing God wants of me, is to get good at beating Germans. That’s sure. But that isn’t what it was. What it was, I never knew, and God knows I never found.”<sup>11</sup>

With the needs and desires of the past never found, Brooke begins the first of the 1914 sonnets, “Peace,” with the word “now,” squarely placing himself in the present, a present whose personal prosperity has been provided by God. The reference to God as the benefactor of his present state of concord and purpose in the midst of declaration of war seems paradoxical if one concurs with Adrian Caesar’s contention that Brooke “had consistently denied Christianity.”<sup>12</sup> Caesar mistakenly supposes that a belief in and reverence of God or religious institutions deems one to be a Christian. Though Brooke had often denied the Christian faith espoused by his parents and his Rugby education, his prior poetry is replete with allusions to a supreme being who has created the platonic ideal. With such a glaringly inaccurate assertion that Brooke’s acknowledgement of a God who is the benefactor of the peace he now experiences implies a return to Christianity, one cannot concur with Caesar’s further assertion that “Brooke’s sudden mention in his opening line constitutes the Victorian inheritance of his mother and father against which he had fought so hard, for so long.”<sup>13</sup> Rather, Brooke is acknowledging God’s power, as did John Donne in *Holy Sonnet 7*, to awaken those who have been sleeping a death in life. This is a prayer of thanksgiving for the bestowing of an opportunity for personal and moral regeneration, and the accompanying sense of harmony

and redemption metaphorically expressed in the analogy of young recruits as “swimmers into cleanness leaping.”<sup>14</sup>

The Victorian inheritance Brooke receives is not the reverential institution of God held by his parents, but rather a moral, social or even cultural importance akin to that expressed by Matthew Arnold as spiritual priorities. Arnold asserts that “earnest young men at schools and universities” must find “salvation as a harmonious perfection only to be won by unreservedly cultivating many sides in us.”<sup>15</sup> And the path to the cultivation of that perfection or purpose is the journey to self-actualization itself.

What is alone and always sacred and binding for man is the climbing towards his total perfection, and the machinery by which he does this varies in value according as it helps him to do it. The worth of what a man thinks about God and the objects of religion depend on what the man is; and that the man is, depends upon his having more or less reached the measure of a perfect and total man.”<sup>16</sup>

Brooke’s “climbing towards his total perfection” is a process not only perfected by the advent of war into which he was reluctantly thrust, but also in the manner in which he comes to view himself as a product or casualty of war, although it is not until December 1914 with the writing of sonnet “V. The Soldier” that Brooke describes the sacrificial dead as “I,” and no longer “we” or “they.” Later use of his most popular sonnet as enlistment propaganda will forever dub Brooke as the poster boy for heroic self-sacrifice and duty to country.

## The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave one, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,  
A body of England's, breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.  
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England  
given;  
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

It is in "Peace" and "Safety" that Brooke sees the young recruit, the potential dead, as the inclusive "we," and in "III. The Dead" and "IV. The Dead" as the exclusive "they."

### I. Peace

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,  
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,  
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,  
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,  
Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,  
Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,  
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,  
And all the little emptiness of love!  
Oh! We, who have known shame, we have found release there,  
Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,  
Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;  
Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there  
But only agony, and that has ending;  
And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.

## II. Safety

Dear! Of all happy in the hour, most blest  
He who has found our hid security,  
Assured in the dark tides of the world that rest,  
And heard our word, 'Who is so safe as we?'  
We have found safety with all things undying,  
The winds, and morning, tears of men and mirth,  
The deep night, and birds singing, and clouds flying,  
And sleep, and freedom, and the autumnal earth.  
We have built a house that is not for Time's throwing.  
We have gained a peace unshaken by pain for ever.  
War knows no power. Safe shall be my going,  
Secretly armed against all death's endeavour;  
Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fall;  
And if these poor limbs die, safest of all.

## III. The Dead

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!  
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,  
But, dying, has made us rare gifts than gold.  
These laid the world away; poured out the red  
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be  
Of work and joy, and that un hoped serene,  
That men call age; and those who would have been,  
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.  
Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,  
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.  
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,  
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;  
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;  
And we have come into our heritage.

## IV. The Dead

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,  
Washed marvelously with sorrow, swift to mirth.  
The years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,  
And sunset, and the colours of the earth.  
These had seen movement, and heard music; known  
Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended;  
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;  
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended.



There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter  
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,  
Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance  
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white  
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,  
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

This progression from the inclusive to the exclusive to the solely personal underscores Brooke's sense of the advent of war not as a patriotic calling, but rather as a source of redemption, first for all his contemporaries who were but "half-men," which is to say schoolboys masquerading as adult men, then for those who expire in the physical commitment to a personal cause, and ultimately for the individual who finally succeeds in giving "back the thoughts by England given." In the final analysis, personal duty to oneself, or self-directed individualized propaganda, becomes a union of the intellectual and the emotional with the pastoral landscape. For Brooke, the call to arms, to enlistment, is not promulgated upon duty to a cause, but rather to England, not the state, but the landscape, the very natural essence that had been the source, the inspiration for his thoughts. His poetry, as a reflection of personal duty and service, is the wellspring of emotion made tangible, given by the land that now is given back.

By the very title of the first sonnet of the sequence, "Peace," and its ultimate conclusion that "the worst friend and enemy is but Death," one cannot subscribe to Pearsall's contention that the sonnets "taken together speak for death over life."<sup>17</sup> Rather, they speak for that release from inner conflict which emerges when one ultimately ceases to dwell in the torturous confines of the never-to-be-recaptured past or dreams of a nebulous future, but finds purpose in the spiritually renewing present. Having finally found a worthy cause in life, Brooke's previous decadent posturing on the nobility and

freedom found in death, a theme which Hemingway would later adopt in *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises*, is reversed in his conclusion that “the worst friend and enemy is but Death,” although the advent of war between Britain and Germany would create severe losses, particularly at Le Cateau where the British II Corps suffered 7800 casualties between August 25 and 27. Yet, amid the forced and disorganized British retreats at Mons, Le Cateau and Guise, Brooke found peace and a sense of gladness in finally discovering a purpose for his hitherto self-perceived life of shame, emptiness and idleness.

Although on August 3 Brooke had expressed his nature as divided or what Faulkner would refer to in his 1953 Nobel Prize acceptance speech as “a heart in conflict with itself,”<sup>18</sup> by August 16, as the garrison of Liege surrendered after days of massive bombardment by German howitzers, Brooke’s ambivalence about the morality of war turned to decisive personal commitment as he found a oneness with home and landscape. Brooke’s almost religious conversion from purposelessness to protector mirrors the cultural community developing in Britain as young men from cities and hamlets flocked to London to embark on the great adventure. For most, and particularly for Brooke, enlistment in the Royal Naval Division or British Expeditionary forces assured not only a sense of purpose, but also what D. H. Lawrence described as freedom found in obedience to the inner self.

Men are freest when they are most unconscious of freedom.  
Men are free when they are in a living homeland, not when they  
are straying and breaking away. Men are free when they are  
obeying some deep, inward voice of religious belief. Obeying  
from within. Men are free when they belong to a living,

organic, believing community, active in fulfilling some  
unfulfilled, perhaps unrealized purpose.<sup>19</sup>

Brooke felt strongly that in order to shield effectively his England of rivers and hills and meadows that he so loved, the natural and domestic community of the home front must be married to the artificial cultural landscape of the war front. But it is not patriotism or misguided goals of killing Germans that becomes the bonding agent of cultural commonality, but rather love of individual and national identity or love of an ideal that yields a state of personal and seemingly communal concordance.

In October 1914, the British War Office sent Rudyard Kipling, whose criticism of the Liberal Party's pacifism earmarked him an imperialist and militarist by many liberals and socialists, on a tour of the New Army camps, whose recruits were being trained to replace those first British Expeditionary Forces whose ranks had been decimated by five days under accurate German artillery fire during the Battle of the Marne. Kipling's tour resulted in a series of pamphlets, collectively published as *The New Army*, intended to present a British army of recruits who were brave, disciplined, loyal and eager to kill Germans. Kipling wanted to present war as a glorious crusade wherein Britain's fighting force is "beautifully fit, and all truly thankful that they lived in these high days."<sup>20</sup> Composed of Canadians, Indians, and Territorials, the New Army's only difference was in their accents, not their purpose. *The New Army* was designed to appeal to conscience and Kipling's treatise of recruiting speeches concluded with:

The Real Question: "What will be the position in years to come of the young man who has deliberately elected to outcast himself from this all-embracing brotherhood? What of his family and, above all, what of his descendants, when the books

have been closed and the last balance struck of sacrifice and sorrow throughout every hamlet, village, parish, suburb, city, shire, district, province and Dominion throughout the Empire?<sup>21</sup>

Herein lies the heart of Stage one propaganda--the appeal to volunteerism--to which Brooke's "Peace" is a response. The rhetoric of future shame for not doing one's duty to God and country was not reserved exclusively for young men of recruitment age. As Belgian refugees poured into Britain, the reports of merciless atrocities performed by Germans, whether factual or fabricated, circulated amongst civilians. The case of Edith Cavell heightened atrocity propaganda. An English woman who had moved to Belgium after the death of her husband, Cavell was the head nurse in a Brussels hospital in September 1914 when she was arrested by the occupying German forces for the crime of helping Allied prisoners escape to the Dutch frontier. Pleading guilty to the charge, she was sentenced to death. Brand Whitlock, the American minister to Belgium, begged for clemency, but it was denied, and on October 11, 1915, Edith Cavell was executed by a German firing squad.

The case of Edith Cavell struck a romantically responsive chord in the hearts of many young recruits who saw heroism as a state of being attainable not only through one's own enlistment, but through the volunteer efforts of wives and lovers. Women were now seen as a new branch of the New Army, and were encouraged to do their duty to God and country and so prove their love for the absent young soldier. The familiar lines of Richard Lovelace's "To Lucasta, Going to the Wars"--"I could not love thee, dear, so much, / Loved I not honor more"--became the fodder for a new propaganda devoid of gender differentiation.

In September 1914, Rupert Brooke obtained a commission in the Royal Naval Division together with his former Rugby classmate Denis Browne. By October 1, they were assigned to the Anson Battalion, which moved into Belgium to prepare for the climax of the “Race to the Sea.” By October 6, the expedition appeared to be a failure as the defenders of the port of Antwerp were in danger of being cut off and, on October 10, what remained of the Belgian field army was evacuated, causing Antwerp to fall to German occupancy.

Brooke’s letters concerning the failed expedition and fall of Brussels comport with findings of the Committee to Investigate Alleged German Outrages, which, under the leadership of Lord Bryce, compiled reports of German atrocities against Belgian women and children, L. H. Grondys, a Dutch professor of physics at the Technical Institute of Dordrecht, presented a firsthand account of the German occupation which avoids the claims of rape and infant decapitation found in the Bryce Report.

The attitude of the population in the capital had changed during the first days of the invasion. The terrible rumors which preceded the German troops had intimidated the Bruxellois. Two days later the sight of the Germans had almost become a pastime. The citizens watched their musters with curiosity, admired their horses and the martial order which reigned in their ranks. In a short time, by a phenomenon of which I have already spoken, the population plucked up courage again, and its pride revived. In proportion as the Germans settled down in their new surroundings and tried to approach the inhabitants, the latter drew back, and pretended to ignore them. They had almost admired them as enemies, but the idea of friendship with them excited disgust. A thousand disagreeable little incidents<sup>22</sup> happened to the invaders.

The cultural community of anti-German sentiment in Britain was fed by the sensationalism of the Bryce Report that was designed to arouse feelings of guilt, shame

and fear that the alleged atrocities inflicted by Germany upon the people of Belgium were indeed more horrific than originally thought. The Report inferred that if Britain did not take action against the Germans to aid Belgium, it would only be a matter of time before English citizenry would be victimized as well. The Grondys report, and its attempt to provide a balanced firsthand observation, was subsumed by the aims of statesmen to justify the war through the use of a rhetoric that capitalized upon unconscious prejudices and stereotypes to create what historian Eric J. Leeds refers to as “the community of August,” which successfully eradicated class distinctions and regional cultural idiosyncrasies. The sensationalization of the fall of Brussels, possible only because of the German bestial and violent nature against women and children, became crystallized in the “Remember Belgium” poster that pictured a soldier standing guard as terrified women and children with only the few possessions they can carry in their arms, flee across fields of fire.

So profoundly did Brooke’s firsthand vision of thousands of Belgians fleeing their homeland affect him that he believed it was everyone’s personal and professional duty to serve the great cause in whatever capacity was possible. Although his pre-1914 politically charged Fabian posturings were so liberally socialist that voluntary military service under the auspices of “For God and Country” was to him morally and personally repugnant, the fear of England’s countryside being ravaged and burned like Belgium’s brought forth a personal and patriotic spirit of duty and responsibility hitherto untapped. Whereas Brooke’s cultural community had been the small circle of Cambridge friends whom Virginia Woolf had called “the Neo-pagans” because of their desire “to sweep aside the

cobwebs of Victorianism, enjoy both friendship and love at the highest pitch, and prolong their youth into an indefinitely glorious future,”<sup>23</sup> the advent of war and the realization that the sacrifice of others exceeds that of the self creates a community not of the intellectual or purely rational, but of the emotional.

But neither Cathleen Nesbitt nor any of his other female friends volunteered either as nurses or relief workers. From January 1915 until his death on April 23, 1915, Brooke’s correspondence and associations were only with those whom he regarded as loyal to his personal cause. Nesbitt had broken the bond of trust he held sacred, and although such broken trusts of the past had shattered him, the newfound peace Brooke had discovered, a purposeful life within a cultural community of emotionally directed thinking and regimented action, sustained him.

By the middle of December 1914, British casualties were reaching staggering proportions. In early November, German warships bombarded and laid mines along Britain’s coast. The attack on the ports of Whitby and Hartlepool resulted in over 700 casualties. The civilian death toll and widespread property damage sent shockwaves throughout Britain as the news became public that the First Battle of Ypres, October 20-November 22, had cost Britain 2,368 officers and 55,787. As the year ended, World War I was only six months old, but the number of casualties was unparalleled in the history of warfare. France, Britain and Belgium suffered more than one million casualties while the Germans had 950,000 soldiers, killed, wounded or missing in action; Austria-Hungary had one million dead or wounded, while for the Russians the figure was 1.8 million. Even Serbia stood at 170,000.<sup>24</sup> As reports reached Brooke of this unparalleled carnage, many

of the casualties having been his former Rugby and Cambridge classmates, the voice of his sonnets departed from the previously personal and inclusive “we” to the reverential and exclusive “they.”

“III. The Dead,” with its militaristic opening of bugles blowing, is the only sonnet in the sequence in which Brooke utilizes the Petrarchan rhyming scheme in the octave. Like the Petrarchan lover who can never fully possess the love object, dead soldiers can only achieve the ultimate prize in the mind, not in the flesh. Here, more than in any of his earlier poems, Brooke is more careful with the rhyming scheme, giving particular emphasis to the pairings of his words. Fussell emphasizes Brooke’s assertion that the dead have “poured out the red sweet wine of youth,” including it in a “system of ‘high’ diction which was not the least of the ultimate casualties of the war.”<sup>25</sup> However, Fussell goes on to assert erroneously that “the sacrificial theme, in which each soldier becomes a type of crucified Christ<sup>26</sup>” is the theme of most Great War poetry, and specifically Rupert Brooke’s.

Fussell’s assertion that “the idea of sacrifice urged some imaginations to homoeroticize the Christ-soldier analogy”<sup>27</sup> is based upon his own view of Christ as “murdered, stripped, upon the Cross”<sup>28</sup> and his belief that the widespread tale of the Crucified Canadian gained acceptance as fact because it commingled propaganda with religion. As John Ward has pointed out, “the tale began after the Second Battle of Ypres [when] a story appeared in the *Toronto Star* on May 11, 1915, telling of a Canadian sergeant lashed to a tree by his arms and legs and bayoneted sixty times. As is often the case, the story came second-hand from a witness who died in the arms of the story-teller.”



As the story circulated, the alleged victim was sometimes a girl, a civilian, an old man, and even an American. Efforts to conclusively establish the identities of both victim and story teller proved so futile that in May 1930, the Canadian government stated that since insufficient evidence had been produced to support the contention that such an event had actually occurred, it was almost certainly without factual basis. Desmond Morton suggests, “It was a remarkably useful story. In a Christian age, a Hunnish enemy had proved capable of mocking Christ’s agony on the cross, providing a means of transforming casual colonials into ruthless fighters.” Like the unsubstantiated reports of rape, murder, plunder and carnage perpetuated by the bestial Germans upon the angelic Belgian civilians found in the Bryce Report, the myth of the Crucified Canadian helped perpetuate the propaganda of a Teutonic Beast unleashed. However, nothing in Brooke’s 1914 sonnets supports either of Fussell’s post-Vietnam War views of the soldier as sacrificial lamb, and indeed Brooke never uses the word “sacrifice,” nor makes any illusionary references to the legend of the Crucified Canadian.

Brooke’s “III. The Dead” is both a call to arms and an elegy for those who gave their future years, “that un hoped serene that men call age,” and, more poignantly, their progeny. But if the dead have been forever barred from begetting human progeny, the sestet offers an alternative road to immortality through the transformation from “dead in life” directionless young men to mythical and even sacred knights who would bring honor, gallantry and chivalry to England. In perishing for the salvation and perpetuation of civilization, the dead bequeath to the living a new trinity, that of holiness, honor, nobility. The man in pursuit of honor and love of country is the new Galahad.

Although Fussell endeavors to convince his reader that all World War I poetry (and specifically that of Brooke, Owen, Sassoon and Blunden) portrays the soldier as the crucified Christ, the medieval knight and the suffering or humiliated Christ are more apt. Citing the lines “He faced me, reeling in his weariness, / Shouldering his load of planks, so hard to bear” in Sassoon’s “The Redeemer,” and “for 14 hours yesterday I was at work, teaching Christ to lift his cross by numbers, and how to adjust his crown,”<sup>29</sup> Fussell asserts that the recruit’s “suffering could be conceived to represent the sacrifice of all, at the same time that it was turned by propaganda into an instrument of hate.”<sup>30</sup> For the metaphor and allegory to be valid, those who killed Christ or condoned his crucifixion, should therefore be as much the object of hatred and reprisal as the Germans against whom the Crucified Canadian propaganda was directed.

Brooke’s dead are holy soldiers who have restored honor to the throne and have “paid his subjects” with the “royal wage” of his and his direct progeny’s blood. “Nobleness walks in our ways again” and the chorus to be sung to these heroic knights must rise as it hovered near to Sir Galahad in Tennyson’s “Sir Galahad.” “O just and faithful knight of God! / Ride on! The prize is near.” This chivalric tradition of the knight/warrior as long-suffering and glorified through trial and humiliation has its roots in both the Old Testament and the shift in the Christian view of Christ in the eleventh century.

The coming of the Messiah is foretold in Daniel 7:13-14.

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was

given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.

Richard Longnecker advises that in Hebrew, the phrase “Son of Man” is *bar enosh*.

*Enosh* emphasizes the mortal, frail, creaturely, incurable nature of man in the bondage of corruption . . . while Daniel 7:13-14 indeed speaks to the glorification of the Son of Man, it is in context a glorification and vindication through suffering. Both aspects of 1) humiliation and suffering, on the one hand, and 2) vindication and glory on the other, are signaled by the expression “Son of Man.”<sup>31</sup>

Around the twelfth century, Christians began to pray to Christ as the man who had endured suffering and died a humiliating death. Whereas the image of a crucified Christ spawns subconscious associations with crime and judgment, suffering for righteousness’ sake provides reassurance, hope, and heroism--all characteristics of the chivalric knight. Crucifixion implies a death sentence levied against and subsequently carried out by the state against one within its community. The cultural community in the war poetry of Brooke, Owen and Sassoon is purely British and the executing authority in 1915 is not the state within, but the enemy without.

In December 1914, Brooke again wrote to Violet Asquith from Dorset where he was stationed with the Hood Battalion. “I must retire to my cabin to write the remainder of my promised sonnets. One is turning out fairly good. It’s rather like developing photographs.”<sup>32</sup> The sonnet to which he was referring was “IV. The Dead,” and the picture that was unfolding was taking the shape of an elegy to the fallen comrades who

had been his childhood friends at School Field in Rugby. Brooke would later write that, of all his sonnets, “IV. The Dead” was the one in which he felt the greatest pride.

The dead of the octave are those who, like the speaker in “The Great Lover,” have known the simple, seemingly inconsequential things in life, which stir the heart to joy and sorrow, mirth and care. The brief years have known kindness, music, love, friendship, wonder, “flowers and furs and cheeks,” all echoes of the great catalog of earthly, mutable pleasures enumerated in “The Great Lover.” But, also, they have known dawn and sunset, those daily occurrences in a soldier’s day when, as Fussell has described it,

everyone stared silently across the wasteland at the enemy’s hiding places and considered how to act if a field-gray line suddenly appeared and grew larger and larger through the mist and the half-light. Twice a day, everyone enacted this ritual of alert defense that served to dramatize what he was in the trench for and that couldn’t help emphasizing the impossibility of escape.<sup>33</sup>

As Brooke was writing “IV. The Dead,” soldiers on the Western Front were exhausted, despondent and disillusioned by the number of casualties suffered in proportion to the gains realized. It was becoming painfully evident that the first wave of British propaganda, designed to encourage volunteerism, that promised a war of no more than six weeks, was woefully deceptive. The war, as H. G. Wells remarked in *The War That Will End War*, was not about killing people or occupying landscape, but about killing ideas. The “ideas” to which he alludes are, in truth, Wells’ belief that the landscape of the orderly Edwardian world of the intellectual, with his gentlemanly games of sport, country manors and freedom from any sense of danger, had been destroyed by the irresponsibility and political aims of a misguided government. This was not a war for British territorial

expansion or colonialization, but one in which the prize was that distant sphere where emotion and intellect construct the self. As 1914 came to a close, Wells wrote, “The ultimate purpose of this war is propaganda, the destruction of certain beliefs, and the creation of others. It is to this propaganda that reasonable men must address themselves.”<sup>34</sup>

Exhausted, disillusioned and half frozen, soldiers on the Western Front on Christmas Day 1914 abandoned reason and “the ultimate purpose of this war,” climbed out of their trenches and marched out onto No Man’s Land, where no one had stood for six months.<sup>35</sup> Some British and German soldiers met in the middle of a wasteland, shared cigarettes and gifts, talked and played soccer. It was all very reasonable in a thoroughly unreasonable world. As Christmas Day turned to night, destruction of beliefs and bodies resumed. The war was back on. There would be no immediate escape--save death. For Brooke’s dead, escape had come. He concludes the octave of “IV. The Dead” by declaring, as he had in “The Great Lover,” that “nothing remains,” for “all this is ended.”<sup>36</sup>

Though death, as pictured in the sestet, brings an end to the universal, sensual and emotional experiences presented in the octave, the very landscape of the December 1914 battlefield, like frost itself, crystallizes and transforms all earthly things into a “gathered radiance.” It is death as frost, which is to say the redemptive quality of trench water, now transformed and refashioned, which is the landscape of war. Those who have fallen, whose limbs now grow as brittle and hard as ice itself, leave “a white unbroken glory, a gathered radiance” of humiliation and suffering, and vindication and glory. Though

Brooke had concluded “The Great Lover”--his poem cataloging the personal, domestic and rural landscape that bear no meaning in a world bent on destruction--with the image of nothing remaining, here, having found a spiritual and national calling that ultimately created a sense of unity out of divided natures, he ends the sonnet with the conviction that “a shining peace” shall forever illuminate and shine upon those who die in the cause of overcoming oppositional ideologies.

In January 1915, Brooke was staying at Walmer Castle in Kent while completing “The Recruit,” his original title for “The Soldier.” On January 5, he learned of the death of a dear friend, James Flecker, and was asked to write his obituary for the *Times*. Writing to Edward Marsh on January 8, Brooke expressed his disdain for the task of reducing the myriad of fond memories and sentiments between friends to the impersonal catalog of facts so very characteristically found in newspaper obituaries. “I spent a lovely hour of the afternoon with Cathleen penning some absurd phrases about Flecker. I was grotesque & ornate; not having time to be simple. What a miserable task, writing a friend’s obituary in the *Times*.”<sup>37</sup> It is evident Brooke’s belief that one’s recollections of a departed friend should be simple was on his mind as he penned “The Soldier.” The opening line of the octave makes but one simple request. “If I should die, think only this of me.” In effect, Brooke is saying, “When I die, don’t write or think ‘grotesque & ornate’ things as I did for Flecker.”

What Brooke desires to be recalled has its roots in Hilaire Belloc’s novel *The Four Men*, which Brooke had read in June 1912. The novel, published earlier that year, recounts a rural ambulatory journey through Sussex, undertaken by Myself, Sailor,

Grizzlebeard and Poet, symbolically the four aspects of Belloc's own personality. Poet's expression of what man hungers for above all else, a longing for home, the every essence of inner peace, is what Brooke is alluding to in the octave of "The Soldier":

Whatever you read in all writings of men, and whatever you  
hear in all the speech of men, and whatever you notice in the  
eyes of men, of expression or reminiscence or desire, you will  
see nothing in any man's speech or writing or expression to  
match that which marks his hunger for home.<sup>38</sup>

Though Brooke is contemplating his death and subsequent internment in "some corner of a foreign field," he is telling his loved ones not to be concerned that his soul is longing for its earthly homeland, but rather to know that he is one with it. As his body degenerates and returns to the dust from which it was formed, it shall be one with the dust from which the flowers, river and byways described in "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester" had been shaped. Whereas in "Dust" Brooke had envisioned an afterlife where "one mote of all the dust that's I / Shall meet one atom that was you," where "you" is a young woman and presumably Noel Olivier, he now proclaims that eternal fusion with the beloved shall be one with the essence of home. One sees here a distinct and incontrovertible expression of the ultimate victory of his puritanical side. Brooke does not desire an eternal union with the corporeal, but with the spiritual, and the spiritual is associated with the rural landscape of his home in Grantchester.

In the sestet, Brooke's heart at peace, "all evil shed away," becoming in afterlife but "a pulse in the eternal mind," is consumed by the England he loved. But this is not Dickens's England of coal factories, slums, cities and marketplaces, but the academic and pastoral world of Grantchester, the world of "laughter, learnt of friends," the "quiet kind"

which provided the peace to heal “the lies, and truths, and pain” of his pre-war days’ ennui. The envisioned total fusion with the beloved, hoped for in “Dust,” but ultimately realized in “The Soldier,” provides Brooke with the sense of peace he had found so elusive. It is not coincidental that the very word “peace” appears in each of the 1914 Sonnets, save “III. The Dead,” which is an elegy to his fallen comrades. Wherever Brooke utilizes an inclusive pronoun in the 1914 sonnets, the actual word “peace” is found either in the title itself or in the sestet.

After August 14, 1914, the Ottoman Empire closed the waterway between the Aegean and the Black Seas, thus blocking a sea route to southern Russia. Although in February and March 1915 the French and British attacked the Dardanelles, a strait that formed part of the waterway, underwater mines prevented their success. In April 1915, British troops sailed for the Gallipoli Peninsula on the west coast of the Dardanelles. There they would be joined by troops from New Zealand and Australia, and the mission was to reopen the waterway and take possession of Constantinople.

On April 19, Brooke led his platoon in an exercise on the Greek island of Skyros, preparatory to their sailing to Gallipoli. It would be an ironic site for the last exercise in which he would participate. In less than a fortnight, the very place where he had relaxed with members of his battalion after the completion of their maneuvers would become his final resting place. Within twenty-four hours after returning to the ship that evening, a seemingly inconsequential inflammation of the lip rendered Brooke desperately ill. The coral poisoning he had suffered in Tahiti had expended his immune system’s ability to combat infection. The inflammation soon spread to his face and neck, and by the evening



of April 22, Arthur Asquith and Denis Browne transferred the feverish and nearly comatose Brooke to the French hospital ship *Duguay-Trouin*. But all attempts to arrest the rampant infection were in vain. On April 23, 1915, at 4:46 p.m., Rupert Chawner Brooke died. Arthur “Oc” Asquith was certain Brooke would not have wanted a burial at sea, and thus made the decision that he should be buried in the olive grove on the island of Skyros where he had last enjoyed the company of his comrades. Asquith, Denis Brown and Cleg Kelley, none of whom would live to see the end of the war, led the burial detail. A small white cross was placed at the foot of the grave, bearing a simple inscription in Greek.

Here lies  
The servant of God  
Sub-lieutenant in the  
English Navy  
Who died for the  
deliverance of Constantinople from  
the Turks

During the weeks immediately following Rupert Brooke’s death, British and American newspapers were deluged with such an outpouring of tributes, eulogies and remembrances that the minor poet/soldier was quickly transformed into a modern day hero of mythic proportions. D. H. Lawrence, a vocal opponent of the war, wrote in a letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, under date of April 30, 1915, his recollection of Brooke.

He was slain by bright Phoebus’ shaft – it was in keeping with his general sunniness – it was the real climax of his pose. I first heard of him as a Greek god under a Japanese sunshade, reading in his pyjamas at Grantchester – at Grantchester under the lawns where the river goes. Bright Phoebus smote him down. It is all in the saga. O God, O God, it is all too much of a piece; it is like madness.<sup>39</sup>

Although Lawrence obviously was referring to the war as “madness,” the frenzy and fevered efforts of Britain’s professional propagandists to reinvent Brooke as the legendary hero began to eclipse truth. Brooke was being transformed into a politicized chivalric knight, and the heights to which he was being elevated were so lofty and tenuous that an eventual fall was inevitable.

Brooke’s final sonnet, “The Soldier,” is the most famous single poem of the Great War. Fame, however, can often be a double-edged word. Though “The Soldier,” when published, would assure Brooke a literary and historic niche in the early twentieth-century canon of British war poetry, his reputation as the craftsman of songs “of picturesque nobilities and death in a glorious case” would be elevated by propagandists such as Winston Churchill and Prime Minister Asquith and, with equal force, debased by contemporary poets and future critics, such as Charles Hamilton Sorley and Paul Fussell. In the obituary, which appeared in the *Times* after Brooke’s death, Winston Churchill would write:

A voice had become audible, a note had been struck, more true, more thrilling, more able to do justice to the nobility of our youth in arms engaged in this present war, than any other more able to express their thoughts of self-surrender, and with a power to carry comfort to those who watch them so intently from afar. The voice has been swiftly stilled. Only the echoes from the memory remain; but they will linger. The thoughts to which he gave expression in the very few comparable war sonnets which he has left behind will be shared by many thousands of young men moving resolutely and blithely forward in this, the hardest, the cruelest, and the least-regarded of all wars that men have fought. They are a whole history and revelation of Rupert Brooke himself. Joyous, fearless, versatile, deeply instructed with classic symmetry of mind and body, ruled by high undoubting purpose, he was all that one would wish England’s noblest sons to be in the days when no sacrifice

but the most precious is acceptable, and the most precious is that which is most freely proffered.<sup>40</sup>

Winston Churchill's obituary of Rupert Brooke appeared in the *Times* on April 22, 1915, sandwiched in between a brief biography of his life and an overview of his poetry. Churchill's praise of Brooke as one whose poetry possessed a "power to carry comfort to those who watch so intently from afar" was intended to offer solace to those who expectantly awaited news as to the outcome of the ill-fated Gallipoli invasion. Though Churchill had genuine feelings of affection for Brooke during his lifetime, he utilized Brooke's private sentiments for public propaganda, often quoting "The Soldier" as recruitment rhetoric.

Charles Hamilton Sorley, a contemporary of Brooke's and a captain in the Suffolk regiment serving on the Western Front, was one of the earliest of Brooke's debasers. Writing to his mother in April 1915 about the 1914 sonnets, he voiced his criticism of what he felt was a total belief in and subscription to Allied propaganda of self-sacrifice to a greater cause:

I saw Rupert Brooke's death in *The Morning Post*. *The Morning Post*, which has always hitherto disapproved of him, is now loud in his praises because he has conformed to the stupid axiom of literary criticism that the only stuff of poetry is violent physical experience, by dying on active service. I think Brooke's earlier poems – especially notably *The Fish* and *Grantchester*, which you can find in *Georgian Poetry* – are his best. The last sonnet-sequence of his, of which you sent me the review in the *Times Lit. Sup.*, and which has been so praised, I find (with the exception of that beginning "Their hearts were woven of human joys and cares, Washed marvelously with sorrow" which is not about himself) over-praised. He is far too obsessed with his own sacrifice, regarding the going to war of himself (and others) as a highly intense, remarkable and sacrificial exploit, whereas it is merely the conduct demanded

of him (and others) by the turn of circumstances, where non-compliance with this demand would have made life intolerable. It was not that “they” gave up anything of that list he gives in one sonnet: but that the essence of these things had been endangered by circumstances over which he had no control, and he must fight to recapture them. He has clothed his attitude in fine words: but he has taken the sentimental attitude.<sup>41</sup>

A sonnet found amongst Sorley’s belongings after his death on the Western Front the following October speaks of honor, as had Brooke’s; however, Sorley’s absence of the inclusive pronoun “I,” an absence of self and thus inherent distancing, does little to obliterate a sense of “the sentimental attitude” for which he had criticized Brooke.

Give them not praise. For, dead, how should they know  
It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?  
Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.  
No honour. It is easy to be dead.<sup>42</sup>

These proponents and debasers of Brooke have one thing in common. Overwhelmingly, they regard the speaker of “The Soldier” as expressing sentiments common to all soldiers, and therefore fail to recognize its autobiographical and personal sentiments. Brooke is directing these very personal sentiments to a small cultural community of closely held loved ones and not, as many have surmised, to a general community swayed by a rhetoric Sorley viewed as the conduct demanded of one to recapture those things endangered by circumstance. Here Brooke is musing upon only his own possible demise, not the deaths of other soldiers, or even those whom he had eulogized in the two sonnets bearing the title “The Dead.” Brooke, as William Butler Yeats would do twenty-four years later in “Under Ben Bulbin,” is writing his own elegy.

A tribute published in the *Sphere* on May 13, 1915 is representative of the exalted and perhaps overreaching praise, which ultimately would destroy Brooke's reputation as a legitimate voice. "Brooke was the only English poet of any consideration who has given his life in his country's wars since Philip Sidney received his death wound under the walls of Zutphen in 1586."<sup>43</sup> The concerted effort to transform Brooke into a hero of supernatural proportions was augmented by Winston Churchill, who declared in a tribute to the *1914 Sonnets*:

We meet his verses everywhere. They are quoted again and again. They are printed on newspaper, written in books, blotted by tears, and carved in stone. But they belong to us, to the Royal Naval Division.<sup>44</sup>

Such attempts to appropriate Brooke as the "poster boy" for the war effort ran rampant.

As Lehman points out in his biography of Brooke,

One can say that Rupert's death . . . was a god-send for the politicians and generals who used him – perhaps without fully realizing what they were doing – to create a legendary inspiration for the national cause, a mouthpiece for patriotic sentiments that demanded simple, exalted expression beyond the ranting of newspapers and the tub-thumping demagogues.<sup>45</sup>

Only a few of Brooke's closest friends understood the eventual tragedy, which was looming on the horizon. Harold Monroe, with whom Brooke, Marsh, Drinkwater and Gibson had envisioned the anthology *Georgian Poetry*, was a lone voice of prophetic fear in an undulating sea of Brooke hysteria:

One fears his memory being brought to the poster-grade. 'He did his duty. Will you do yours?' is hardly the moral to be drawn. Few people trouble to know much about poetry – but everyone takes an intelligent interest in death. It is something definite to understand about a poet, that he is dead . . . His

whole poetry is full of the repudiation of sentimentalism. His death was not more lovely than his life (*Cambridge Magazine*, May 22, 1915).<sup>46</sup>

In June 1915, *1914 and Other Poems*, which contained the by then well-known war sonnets as well as the South Seas poems, was published by Frank Sedgwick. The slim volume was an overnight best seller, although the platonic overtones of some of the poems Brooke penned while in the South Seas proved unnerving to the general English reading public whose previous exposure to Brooke's poetry had been only "The Soldier." Hassall relates one review of *1914 and Other Poems*, which appeared in the *New Statesman* one month after the volume was published.

The *New Statesman* put it plainly. "A myth has been created: but it has grown round an imaginary figure very different from the real man." Although readers of the evening papers were as familiar with the sonnets as with Hamlet's soliloquy, uncritical admiration was laying them open to more objective comment, and now – here were the poems from Tahiti. "Some of the Deans and great-aunts," wrote the *New Statesman* "who picture Brooke as a kind of blend of General Gordon and Lord Tennyson will have a jolt when they read the poem on the theology of fishes."<sup>47</sup>

If the publication of *1914 and Other Poems* elevated Brooke to a national standing in the eyes of the British as the poet/writer who embodied a sense of duty and the honorable sacrifice of self, in the United States Brooke appealed to America's love of romance. In 1915, the New York publishing house of John Lane Company released *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke*. The immediate best seller contained an unfortunate and overly sentimental introduction by the Massachusetts critic George Woodbury, as well as uneven and often inaccurate biographical notes by Margaret Lavington. However, the concluding sentimental remarks in Woodbury's introduction appear to have been

designed to pluck the heart strings of the American reading public. Whether by design or sheer happenstance, Lane's edition of Brooke's poetry catapulted the deceased Englishman into the ranks of America's best-loved poets.

There is a grave in Scyros, amid the white and pinkish marble of the isle, the wild thyme and the poppies, near the green and blue waters. There Rupert Brooke was buried. Thither have gone the thoughts of his countrymen, and the hearts of the young especially. It will long be so. For a new star shines in the English heavens.<sup>48</sup>

The United States and Great Britain were going "Brooke crazy." While the English were proposing that a bust of Brooke immediately be erected in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey and that the clock at Grantchester be fixed permanently at ten to three, Americans were making their own contributions to the growing list of proposed and executed Brooke memorials. Henry James, in "a magnificently convoluted essay,"<sup>49</sup> which later was incorporated as the preface in Brooke's posthumously published *Letters from America*, portrayed the man as

an unprecedented image, formed to resist erosion by time or vulgarization by reference. No young man had ever so naturally taken on under the pressure of life the poetic nature, and shaken it so free of every encumbrance by simply wearing it as he wore his complexion or his outline.<sup>50</sup>

The September 12, 1915 edition of *The New York Times Magazine* published a two-page biography of Brooke, written by Joyce Kilmer who subsequently died at the second Battle of the Marne on July 30, 1918. Among the many factual errors contained in the article was the statement that "Rupert Brooke's death at the Front illustrates the paradox of the effect on literature of war, which ended his career and made him

immortal.” Although Brooke saw no action on either the western or eastern fronts, Kilmer’s claim “that if it were not for the war he would not now be dead,” fueled America’s quest for a romantic war hero. As 1915 came to a close, Britain decided male conscription must be instituted as General Joseph Joffre of France and General Sir Douglas Haig of Britain met to discuss an attack along the Somme River. The first eighteen months of the war had not only produced dramatic ruptures in political and national areas, but also dramatically altered the way in which the world was experienced by both men and women even though the war focused on men and war propaganda was designed to recruit only male respondents. But Rupert Brooke’s “war sonnets” and the resounding themes of the romantic motif of quest and personal duty struck a responsive chord with many women writers who volunteered as nurses, ambulance drivers, journalists, recruiters and even spies. Just as Brooke brought to the writing of war the landscape of his cultural community, women writers negotiated the male domain of war literature by bringing the domestic landscape onto the war front and thus creating a new, inclusive rather than exclusive, community of Great War writers. Women participated in the war; struggled under, yet endured, its full impact upon their lives on both the home and war fronts; and, like Brooke, recorded the manner in which their particular responses to the effects of war upon both soldiers and civilians defined their own cultural and personal identities and communities. And, like Brooke, their writings became a literature of propaganda.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ian Westwell, *World War I Day by Day* (Osceola, WI: MBI Publishing Company, 2000), p. 13.



<sup>2</sup> M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.), p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> S. L. A. Marshall, *World War I* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Seventh Edition, Volume 2A*. M. H. Abrams, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), p. 477.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *The Letters of Rupert Brooke* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1968), p. 608.

<sup>6</sup> John Gray, *Liberalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1915* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Rupert Brooke, *Letters from America* (New York: Beaufort Books Publishers, 1988), pp. 219-220.

<sup>9</sup> Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer* (New York: Vintage International, 1988), p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> William E. Laskowski, *Rupert Brooke* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> Keynes, p. 631.

<sup>12</sup> Adrian Caesar, *Taking It Like A Man* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Rupert Brooke, *The Poetical Works*, Geoffrey Keynes, ed. (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1970), p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, Samuel Lipman, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. xxxi.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xlv, xlvii.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Brainard Pearsall, *Rupert Brooke: The Man and the Poet* (Amsterdam: Rodopi N. V., 1974), p. 148.

<sup>18</sup> William Faulkner, *Essays, Speeches and Public Letters*, James B. Meriwether, ed. (London: Chatto & Winders, 1967), p. 119.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Delany, *D. H. Lawrence's Nightmare: The Writer and His Circle in the Years of the Great War* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The New Army* (New York: Doubleday and Page, 1914), p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> L. H. Gondys, Ph.D. *The Germans in Belgium* (London: William Heinemann, 1915), p. 83.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Delany, *The Neo-pagans: Rupert Brooke and the Ordeal of Youth* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), p. xiii.

<sup>24</sup> Westwell, p. 47.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>31</sup> Richard N. Longnecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 87-88.

<sup>32</sup> Keynes, p. 634.

<sup>33</sup> Fussell, p. 51.

<sup>34</sup> H. G. Wells, *The War That Will End War* (London: Palmer, 1914), p. 91.

<sup>35</sup>In his account of the Christmas Eve 1914 truce, *Silent Night*, Stanley Weintraub offers, "The truce bubbled up from the ranks. Though it was to become so widespread as to impact much of the front, no one was ever certain where and how it had begun." Records at the Imperial War Museum in London indicate that because the impromptu truce was not a sanctioned one and occurred sporadically along that trench line of the Western Front in Flanders, the number of soldiers who actually participated in the event cannot be determined with any great degree of accuracy. Stanley Weintraub, *Silent Night* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), p. 21.

<sup>36</sup>Brooke was in Antwerp during late December 1914. Because no mention of the Christmas Eve truce can be found in the letters, diaries and journals written during 1914 and 1915 and no part of the Rupert Brooke Collection housed at King's College, Cambridge, it is not known whether he was aware of the event of, if he was, what his reactions were.

<sup>37</sup>Keynes, pp. 651-52.

<sup>38</sup>Hilaire Belloc, *The Four Men* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1912), p. 204.

<sup>39</sup>Christopher Hassall, *Rupert Brooke: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1964), p. 516.

<sup>40</sup>Keynes, p. 582.

<sup>41</sup>Charles Sorley, *The Letters of Charles Sorley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919), pp. 262-63.

<sup>42</sup>Jean Moorcroft Wilson, ed., *The Collected Poems of Charles Hamilton Sorley* (London: Cecil Woolf Publishers, 1985), p. 30.

<sup>43</sup>Hassall, p. 516.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>45</sup>John Lehman, *The Strange Destiny of Rupert Brooke* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), p. 150.

<sup>46</sup>Hassall, pp. 520-21.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Rupert Brooke, *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke* (New York: John Lane Company, 1915), p. xiv.

<sup>49</sup> Hassall, p. 523.

<sup>50</sup> Brooke, *Letters from America*, p. 12.

### Chapter Three

**Dorothy Canfield Fisher:  
Propaganda of the Maternal  
and the Domestic in *Home Fires in France***

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven,  
neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness;  
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

- *The First Epistle of Paul  
the Apostle to the Corinthians 5:8*

The naval battle of the Dogger Bank on January 24, 1915 effectively curtailed German naval raids on Britain, but more importantly, Germany's loss of its flagship, the *Blucher*, along with 951 of its crew, set in motion a series of naval blockades, seizures and sinkings that would, with the sinking of the *Lusitania*, awaken Americans from a state of complacent neutrality to anger and action.

Following its defeat at Dogger Bank, Germany proclaimed that all shipments of grain and flour would be subject to seizure. Prior to this edict, all neutral ships carrying foodstuffs had been allowed to proceed unmolested to Germany and Britain, but following the German edict on January 25, Britain seized the American ship *Wilhelmina*, docked in Falmouth, and confiscated its food supply earmarked for Germany. Enraged by Britain's response in kind, Germany declared that, after February 18, an unrestricted submarine campaign would be in effect and all ships, whether sailing under the flags of neutral or Allied countries, would be sunk without warning. On March 1, with support from France, Prime Minister Asquith announced a counter blockade by Britain against Germany preventing commodities of any kind from entering or leaving Germany. The blockade

would set in motion events that would directly affect the United States' economic interests.

American public sentiment toward these events was one of economic interest rather than political or ideological fervor. The immediate effect of the declaration of war in August 1914 on the United States labor market had been catastrophic. Samuel Gompers reported:

All along the Atlantic coast industry and commerce were dislocated; shipping was tied up; men found that the war had taken away their work, their source of livelihood. Their number was increased by the sailors from interned foreign vessels. Factories dependent upon European trade or products began to run part time and then stopped . . . As the weeks went by the amount and extent of unemployment increased throughout the country . . . Bread lines have been very long during the past winter. Women as well as men have been in those bread lines.<sup>1</sup>

Dress manufacturers were virtually shut down by their inability to obtain German yarns. The oil trade came to a virtual standstill. Steel mills had to reorganize while copper mines stopped production altogether. The decline of a European market for American cotton threatened to ruin the South, while tanneries were forced to close their doors due to the cessation of hide importations. Export shipments in seaports came to a standstill. *The New York Journal of Commerce* reported that "seventy thousand employees of tin plate mills were idle because of the mills' inability to get raw material,"<sup>2</sup> and further estimated that 500,000 men would be out of work in the Pittsburgh area if the war lasted more than a month.<sup>3</sup> Alba B. Johnson, President of the Baldwin Locomotive Works of Pittsburgh, offered the reasons for the dire situation that was plaguing most of the country, and especially the eastern seaboard.

When the war broke out at the beginning of last August, the first result was the sudden and complete paralysis of the financial fabric of all the nations of the world. Not only in our own country, but everywhere, the cessation of financial operations, including the closing of the stock exchanges, occasioned a discontinuance of everything looking to new business, deprived the industries of their markets, and left the manufacturers with nothing to do but to carry out so much of their existing contracts as were not affected by the outbreak of the war. Prior to the war a condition of business prostration had already existed. Then came the declaration of war, which put all large business to an end. We discovered not only that financial operations had stopped, but our merchants, manufacturers, and shippers found that, because of our dependence upon the vessels of other nations, the means of continuing our foreign commerce was [sic] gone. Little by little we have been emerging from that condition. The belligerents have placed with us contracts for vast sums of war material. This has established an activity which in certain lines of business is almost feverish, but it has not created general prosperity. Many lines of business have not yet been roused from their lethargy.<sup>4</sup>

By the end of 1914, some manufacturers began to feel a modest recovery from the national prostration experienced directly after the declaration of war in August. The powder plants began to increase their work forces; orders for canned goods began to arrive; the cessation of glass manufacturing operations in Europe began to benefit the American glass industry; shoe manufacturers began to receive orders for soldiers' boots; and cotton manufacturers benefited from the lack of English competition. By February 1915, when Germany embarked on its campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare, American manufacturers were receiving such a magnitude of orders for products from Europe that American manufacturing companies and banking institutions regarded the "European war" as an economic blessing that would benefit American employment opportunities. The shift of thousands of European men from the factory to the military

caused Europe to draw heavily upon America's production capacity and the excessive labor surplus of 1914-1915 gradually disappeared.

Britain and Germany's mutual policies of commodity blockades did little to alter America's position of neutrality. Although the majority of its citizens favored the Allies after the violation of Belgium and the resounding defeat of the Schlieffen Plan occasioned by the British Expeditionary Force's success in the Battle of the Marne, the American government held firm to its belief that a carefully guarded policy of neutrality was in the best national interest. Although former President Theodore Roosevelt maintained that direct intervention was the only morally, politically, and economically sound course of action, President Woodrow Wilson remained aloof, yet determined to maintain the middle course. But, with the institution of the double blockade, Wilson warned both Britain and Germany that American sentiment was raging against them. Although his warning was purely hyperbole, it soon proved prophetic, at least in its application to Germany.

In late April, disregarding the German warning that unrestricted submarine warfare would be aimed at British ships, the Cunard liner *Lusitania* set sail from New York to England. On May 7, 1915, the vessel was sunk by the German submarine *U-20* off the Old Head of Kinsale coast of Ireland. Of the 1,198 passengers who went down to the bottom of the Irish Sea with the *Lusitania*, 128 were Americans.

Americans responded with rage. Although no direct attack had been made upon American soil or property, her women and children had been violated and with such violation came the realization that neutrality or complacency does not assure safety. Following so closely upon the heels of the death of Rupert Brooke, whom Americans had



come to idolize as the new Galahad willing to sacrifice all for an ideal, the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the loss of American life galvanized a nationalistic pride and solidarity of resentment toward Germany and anything German. However, Wilson endeavored to keep the country out of any direct involvement in the war, defending his position with the unfortunate statement, “There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight.” For many Americans, Wilson’s stance seemed contemptibly fainthearted and immoral.

The first two years of the war not only wreaked cruelties and havoc upon the men who experienced it in the trenches, but upon a civilian population whose homelands were invaded. It is when war threatens the private or civilian landscape of a previously uncommitted, hedonistically complacent populace that a Wilsonian posture of neutrality is quashed by the Brooke doctrine that war produces an abiding sense of personal duty and devotion to a common weal. The sinking of the *Lusitania* aroused emotions of pity, fear, anger and revenge that gave rise to a sense of unity and empathy with the civilian populace of France and Belgium whose homeland had been invaded.

For many Americans, the *Lusitania* was not a British luxury liner but a landscape upon which Americans had lived and perished, not all that different from the fields of Antwerp from which Belgian women and children had fled. Americans had long been tied to Europe by biological and cultural communities of blood, common language and traditions and now they were tied by commonality of experience. The shared experience of an invaded and ravaged landscape became carefully and poignantly constructed in propaganda reports from Paris and London, and Americans were motivated, through emotion if not intellect, to come to the rescue. But, it was not solely “official” or

governmentally generated propaganda that motivated thousands of Americans to respond through altruistic volunteerism to the European war effort. Many novelists and short story writers not only sought to offer interpretation, judgment and significance of the plight of those whose environment had been violated by overt attack and occupation, but, even more importantly, superimposed the familiar domestic landscape upon the battlefield arena and, through a language, specifically feminine in nature, created a gender-specific propaganda that for American women “caught [their] youth, and wakened [them] from sleeping/With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power.”

More than 25, 000 women participated in and wrote of World War I, and most have been forgotten. But of those who have survived, Dorothy Canfield Fisher emerges as the foremost American writer who used a gender-specific language, rooted in the domestic landscape and the manner in which that landscape can serve as the basis for a pro-war propaganda, to reflect Brooke's belief in war as a unifying and purposeful endeavor for a previously self-consumed and undirected people.

Militant propaganda, as governmentally authored rhetoric designed to formulate, direct or change public opinion, is grounded in what Mikhail Bakhtin delineates as paternalistic or “authoritative discourse.” Bakhtin concludes that like religious dogma or scientific proofs, authoritative discourse “demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a *prior* discourse.”<sup>5</sup> This unconscious acknowledgment that the “word of the fathers” is

unquestionably and universally valid is the cornerstone of political rhetoric, particularly when vague references to good and evil, with Biblical overtones, are used to direct public sentiment that a particular course of action is the moral course. Often the rhetoric of propaganda blends religious, historic and classical literary allusions to formulate political and economic policy under the guise of morally correct action. In responding to the sinking of the *Lusitania* and Wilson's stance of continued neutrality, Theodore Roosevelt employed such a blended, paternalistically authoritative discourse to shame Americans to decisive action. "Untried men who live at ease will do well to remember that there is a certain sublimity even in Milton's defeated archangel, but none whatever in the spirits who kept neutral, who remained at peace, and dared side neither with hell nor with heaven."<sup>6</sup> Thus, pacifism, or what Wilson alluded to as being too proud to fight, is seen as lacking any historical basis in authoritative discourse. Pacifism thus is not paternalistic or "the word of the fathers," but rather a form of moral paternalism in the way in which opposition to waging war is a vehicle of intervention on the part of one party to protect the moral welfare of another. Bakhtin suggests that discourse which is not authoritative or paternalistic is

internally persuasive as opposed to one that is externally authoritative. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and that it does not remain in an isolated and static condition. It is not so much interpreted by as it is further, that is, freely developed, applied to new material, new conditions; it enters into an intense interaction, a *struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, discourses grounded in moral paternalism, particularly as they emerge in military propaganda, are generally viewed as a state of inactivity or pacifism.

In her study on gender conformity and the debate over American participation in World War I, Erika Kuhlman notes how pacifism, what can be regarded as coming under the umbrella of moral paternalism, became linked to the feminine.

Both sexes used the tactic of linking pacifism and resistance to the military with womanly accessories such as petticoats, to ridicule gender deviance, reward gender conformity, and win converts to war. Conventional images of weak, vulnerable femininity and strong, protective masculinity reverberated throughout all levels of American society on the eve of the war; in the halls of Congress, within the pages of the press, among circles of progressive reformers, and even among pacifists who earlier had recorded their fundamental opposition to war.<sup>8</sup>

In the Introduction to his influential critical treatise *Orientalism*, Edward Said makes a definitive, if rather dubious, distinction between humanists and those whose writings have political ramifications. For Said, a “humanist” is “a title which indicates the humanities as [one’s] field and therefore the unlikely eventuality that there might be anything political about what [one] does in that field.”<sup>10</sup> Such a definition suggests that for the humanist any rhetoric of propaganda must remain separate and distinct from the culture of literature. Said further delineates his doctrine of separatism by asserting:

The distinction between “humanists” and persons whose work has policy implications, or political significance, can be broadened further by saying that the former’s ideological color is a matter of incidental importance to politics whereas the ideology of the latter is woven directly into his material - indeed, economics, politics, and sociology in the modern academy are ideological sciences - and therefore taken for granted as being “political.”<sup>11</sup>

Although Said's contention may have validity when ascribed to those post Great War writers, such as Hemingway and Faulkner whose "war novels" eschewed the entire war years as giving birth to a generation of lost, purposeless and morally bereft Americans, women writers, and chief among them Dorothy Canfield,<sup>12</sup> created a new mode of war literature, both humanistic and having "policy implications, or political significance."

The language of Canfield's texts merges the authoritative discourse of the accepted feminine sphere of the domestic environment with the internally persuasive discourse of firsthand or immediate war experience. This discursive merger of two seemingly appositional modes of language may appear to be polyphonic, a tolerated diversified language, but, in fact, Canfield's war stories are what Bakhtin refers to as *monologism* or language that does not accept a different point of view. Similar to second stage propaganda, which builds upon the individual's intellectual and emotional response to the perceived threat of "the other" invading one's personal and actual landscape, "the monologue is accomplished and deaf to the other's response. Monologue makes do without the other; this is why, to some extent, it objectifies all reality. Monologue pretends to be the last word."<sup>13</sup>

Canfield's discursive monologues objectify the war experience of the other through superimposing the feminine authoritative realm of the domestic landscape upon the generally male cultural community of war. Building upon the discourse of American women writers of the nineteenth century, such as E.D.E.N. Southworth and Catharine Marie Sedgwick, who "invested male images with female political intent,"<sup>14</sup> Canfield

invests the female domestic images of home and hearth with the authoritative male image of war to substantiate the post-*Lusitania* political monologue that American neutrality can no longer be regarded as moral or economically viable.

The Victorian Age gave rise to the “New Woman,” a fiercely independent and self-sufficient, often well-educated woman who sought those avenues in the public sphere where the traditionally unique ability to nurture and heal could be employed for the public good. When World War I began in August 1914, American women responded to European suffering and, by June 1915, heedless of the warnings that to journey cross the submarine-infested Atlantic was foolhardy at best, American women set about responding to the plight of French and Belgian men, women, and children. By the end of the war, more than 25,000 American women had served overseas in the War to End All Wars as nurses, relief workers, ambulance drivers and mechanics.

In her memoir recalling her experiences as an American volunteer in France, Margaret Deland regarded the response of American women to nurture and heal as the most impressive act of the war years.

Of all the amazing things that have come bubbling and seething to the surface of life during these last three and a half years, there has been nothing more amazing to me than this exodus of American girls! Has such a thing ever happened in the world before: A passionate desire on the part of the women of one people to go to the help of the men of another people? Would any nation, I wonder, if we were at war, send its girls across the ocean to serve us?<sup>15</sup>

Although Deland's memoir suggests that altruism was the sole motivational force for the widespread, and potentially faddish, spirit of volunteerism, some American women were

prompted to war front service because of a desire to escape boredom and respond to a romanticized ideal of the long-suffering soldier.

By 1910, the size of the American family had diminished and, with the introduction into the American household of such modern conveniences as linoleum, electricity, prepared foods and washing and sewing machines, women had more time to work outside the home, whether in the commercial workplace where 8,000,000 American women received wages, or in volunteer capacities.<sup>16</sup> The surge of community volunteerism from 1910 to 1914 provided women with a vehicle to expand the domestic sphere outside the home into their communities where the moral and domestic virtues long regarded as the sole province of women moved from the private to the public.

American women were perceived both at home and abroad as competent, virtuous, and embodying a pioneer spirit rooted in the American mythology of manifest destiny. American men willingly renounced the throne of virtue to their female counterparts and thus grew the perception that men and women could forge public relationships devoid of any threat of sexuality or carnal entanglements. Thus, for many women, the soldier of World War I was viewed as a romantic ideal, a fallen asexual warrior who could be nurtured and mended without any fear of virtue or purity being compromised. This view of the soldier as an unblemished, long-suffering, virginal hero is reflected in an entry in the unpublished diary of the British writer, Irene Rathbone.

I sometimes wish it wasn't the English war convention to keep up this eternally frivolous manner. I so often want to say to a man straight out: "I think you are simply splendid to keep smiling like that when you are plunging back into all this horror which you loathe. Your courage and your gaiety make me ashamed of my own qualities which are never called upon to

face one hundredth of what you go through. You dear smiling wonderful thing, all the wishes of my heart go with you" - or words to that effect! But one must never say them - it wouldn't do - it isn't done.<sup>17</sup>

Although Rathbone refers to an "English war convention," American women were equally naive in their acceptance of the myth of the noble and chivalrous soldier.

With the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and the reports that German soldiers were raping, maiming and killing the Belgian civilian populace, American women by the hundreds responded to the growing plight of the homeless refugees. In December 1915, in response to President Wilson's continued position of American neutrality, despite the heavy bombing of London by German Zeppelin airships, and the execution of Edith Cavell for her part in aiding Belgian and French prisoners-of-war escape, Dorothy Canfield wrote to Celine Sibut, a French friend, concerning her desire to participate in some form of war relief work.

John [Fisher] and I have gone through a very intense emotional crisis. We were becoming so completely unhappy on the subject of our country's attitude toward the war that, one day, I proposed to John that we leave our home and take our children to Paris. He could certainly become useful as an ambulance driver or as a worker in a hospital - or something like that, and perhaps I, too, might find something to do. We considered this plan for three days and we were both on the point of doing it but finally - with many tears on my part - we gave it up because of the children and the dangers of the crossing.<sup>18</sup>

By March 1916, following the initial French losses at Verdun and reports of French and Belgian women and children homeless and starving, Canfield and her husband grew in their resolve to volunteer in whatever capacity possible to aid in the Allied war



effort. Writing again to Sibut, Canfield offers oblique criticism of Wilson and his continued stance of neutrality at all costs.

John and I have decided that we cannot put up with this inactivity any more. I do not claim to judge for my country, and I do not want to condemn our President who has done, without doubt, the best he could. I don't even want to say that in his place I would have done otherwise. But, thank God, I am not in his place; I am in my own which is difficult enough! I can no longer continue to do nothing personally in this great world crisis. It's *our* decision to do something personal as well as send money. We do not yet know what form "doing something personal" will take because that depends on you and on the American Committee of the American Ambulance Hospital, to whom John has written.<sup>19</sup>

During the first few months of the war, the American Relief Clearing House was inaugurated with the prime purpose to provide services, funds and supplies to all organizations performing relief work in France. One of the most visible arms of the American Relief Clearing House was the American Ambulance Hospital in Paris, a volunteer army ambulance corps operating under the auspices of the American Field Service. By mid-1915, the AFS became an autonomous unit and began recruiting its drivers directly from American colleges and universities. Often, individual units were comprised solely of drivers from specific universities. As American young men found the novelty of the ambulance enticing, and the strong desire "to do something" romantically altruistic, many young men, who were otherwise physically unfit for service in the army, found the ambulance corps provided adventure and purpose in an otherwise purposeless life. Such was the case for John Fisher who, prior to sailing to France on April 22, 1916, had lived the life of a gentleman farmer while Dorothy, through her writing, was the source of family income.

Once the Canfield-Fishers had indeed made the decision that John should volunteer as an ambulance driver, the problem of whether Dorothy and the children should remain in Vermont or accompany him to France continued to be what she referred to as “the serious question.” Like so many other American families who opposed their children’s desires to cross the submarine-laden Atlantic, John and Dorothy’s families were adamant that Dorothy should remain in Vermont and not risk the safety of her children.

You can imagine how horrified our two families and our friends have been when they hear that we hope to find something to do to help France. When I say that we believe in giving our children an ideal which is important for them as a childhood completely free of danger, they think I am mad. I am not unaware of the dangers but I think that our families exaggerate them.<sup>20</sup>

But Canfield had little reliable awareness of the dangers and deprivations that existed in the war zones of France and Belgium. The fear of reality impinging upon the romanticism is evident in her questions to Celine Sibut.

People are wrong, aren’t they, when they say that France is in material distress - that there isn’t enough milk or butter, that living is terribly expensive, that the Germans are a threat even in the region south of Paris, and even in Normandy? I like to think of myself settled somewhere with the children, busy writing and earning money so as to continue giving what money we can to your soldiers, orphans and so on.<sup>21</sup>

Yet Canfield’s romanticized vision of writing for the benefit of widows, orphans and wounded soldiers was impinged upon by the realities of the inherent risks of trans-Atlantic travel and living with children in war-torn France. But the desire to respond could not be denied.

John and I are all stirred up over the possibility of our going to France. Our respective families don’t approve, of course,

because everybody in this country has an exaggerated idea of the risk of such an expedition. It all seems very simple and obvious to us. We want to do all that we can to help on the cause of the Allies which seems to us both the cause of civilization. Here I can send money; but John's strength and devotion are not at work; and he is eager to have them.<sup>22</sup>

On April 22, John Fisher sailed to France where he would serve with the American Ambulance Service of the American Ambulance Hospital in Neuilly. Deferring to the entreaties of family and friends, Canfield remained in Vermont with her seven-year-old daughter, Sally, and two-year-old son, Jimmy. Yet, her resentment and the mounting inner struggle of conscience manifested themselves as she wrote to Celine, "For the first time in my life, I have settled a serious question according to the opinions of others and not according to my own judgment. May God grant that all the rest of you are right!"<sup>23</sup>

By July, Canfield could no longer allow the warnings of family and friends to thwart her desire to join her husband in France and actively contribute to the relief work underway in Paris. But, by the time she set sail for Paris in August, John Fisher had been sent to the front and Dorothy's visions of a romantic idyll were dashed. However, once in Paris, Dorothy became a guiding force in relief work for the war blind as she spearheaded the printing and dissemination of books in Braille. Her efforts in aiding the war mutilées, often financed through her own funds, laid the ground work for the later work of Anna Ladd's Parisian studio for the construction and development of facial portrait masks and prostheses for the war mutilées who suffered from the most horrific of injuries.

While in Paris, Canfield wrote incessantly using her maiden name for fiction and her full-married name for the articles she sent to her publisher, trying to illuminate her American readership as to what was really happening in France. But the war was not seen

as a serious threat in America, and Canfield grew increasingly impatient with American neutrality and passivity. Two early war sketches, “The Little Soldier of France” and “In the Brussels Jail,” were, as she advised her publisher, written to be authentic rather than sensational, yet Canfield’s growing frustration with American complacency belies her assertions.

My object in both of them was to try to get something to the American public which would sound *real* to them, would sound like what might happen to any one of us, in comfortable homes in suburbs - and as I remember the war stuff I used to read it didn’t make that impression on me because of its very vociferous quality. There was so much ‘punch’ that subconsciously I thought of it as exciting fiction. Now of course my attempt to pitch war articles in a lower tone may fall on ears so deafened by atrocity tales that they can’t even hear the sound of my voice.<sup>24</sup>

Canfield’s war stories, particularly those collected in *Home Fires in France*, dedicated to her high school geometry teacher turned commander of the American Expeditionary Force in 1918, John Pershing, reflect a divided nature on the very essence of war and its effects on one who had been a liberal pacifist. A letter to long-time friend Sarah Cleghorn reveals the depths of Canfield’s troubled spirit.

I wonder if you realize how faint-hearted and sick I am most of the time, even with the feeling not wavering that there was nothing for the French and Belgians to do but to defend their countries? . . . I have the feeling that our generation is pretty well done for, stunned and stupefied with the bludgeon of war, and that it is only from the children that the future will draw enough vitality to stagger along . . . Last night as I sat at my desk writing, Emiliée came in to call. She said, “Oh don’t let me interrupt you - go on writing.” I said, “What do you suppose I am writing? I am setting down for my own benefit the reasons why I am not a thorough-going non-resistant pacifist.”<sup>25</sup>

Canfield's quandary as to how to reconcile her pre-war pacifist nature, centered in a personal conviction imbued in the power of honor and justice, with her newly awakened sense that Americans must support and actively participate in essentially a European conflict, gave rise to her belief that a first stage propaganda language of persuasion appealing to honor and duty, or what is essentially a propaganda of purpose and guilt, can no longer be effective. In a letter to Sarah Cleghorn regarding passivity versus brute strength, Canfield alludes to the "clumsiness" of honorable language and rules of engagement.

I know you won't remember a sketch I wrote, years ago<sup>26</sup> about a young wife who found that her new husband had fits of inexplicable bad temper - when no matter how gentle and ingeniously tender she was, everything she did only irritated him the more. After a conversation with his old nurse who described him as a child, she takes another course, flies into a pretended rage herself, scolds and threatens and cries. He is astonished and a little daunted, finally (her rage acting as a sort of lightening rod to carry off his bad temper) quite changed in humor, pets her and persuades her out of her "pet," and ends by carrying her off to the theatre and a supper afterwards. It all sounded like light comedy but I felt so deeply the sadness of it I couldn't let it go like that and made an unexpected turn at the ending, where the young wife has a moment of tragic gaze into the future as she sees what manner of man she has united her life to. It was crudely enough done, but it expresses an observation of human nature which fifteen years longer watching of life has not changed. I have observed, or I think I have, that there are certain natures, whom non-resistance acts upon like a sort of irresistible excitant, like a poison, like a powerful drug which they can't resist. It excites them to deeds of brutality which if they had been kept in normal condition by a conviction of the impossibility of their immunity, they would never have thought of doing. I have always labeled them to myself undeveloped characters, people who have stayed an eon or two behind the rest of humanity . . . I suppose there are remnants of that stone-age savagery in the best humans, but there are more of them in some than in others - that at least is

what my observation has shown me. Now it has been my feeling that the Prussian military party is, among nations what that sort of a man is among people - that they just lose their heads altogether when such a chance is put in their hands as Trotsky put, and *can't* be decent, any more than a man with an irresistible temptation to drink can resist a whisky bottle. The thing to do, for such people and such nations, it seems to me, is to introduce prohibition and introduce it by force if necessary . . . I don't think moral suasion can work with such people nor appeals to their honor. I think there aren't many of them left in comparison with the great majority, so few that rules and laws ought not to be made solely with regard to them as we still so much continue to do. But I do think there are some of them. And I think we have been horribly clumsy and wrong in many ways we have conducted this attempt to set things right - it seems to me I am always clumsy and wrong in the way I try to do things - but I can't do anything but go on trying to do.<sup>27</sup>

Canfield's reference to being "always clumsy and wrong in the way [she] tries to do things" is a reference to her perception that her first collection of short stories, *Hillsboro People*, had failed to adequately celebrate the indomitable spirit of the common man. Responding to the turn of the century technological euphoria of an industrial world view referenced by cultural symbols of making,<sup>28</sup> Canfield presents the manner in which rural, genuinely provincial, values are constantly being threatened by an urban, materialistic society wherein the human body itself is often seen as but a machine of technological advancement. Reacting to writers such as William James and Emile Zola, who associated human intelligence and sexual drive with mechanical processes and "hammer-blows and multitudinous clamoring,"<sup>29</sup> Canfield attempts to celebrate the common man and the generic human experience of a potential strength that attain superhuman levels of accomplishment when faced with extreme adversity.

In some of the sketches in *Hillsboro People*, the inherent value and dignity of “the other,” or those who either by choice or design are forced to exist outside the mainstream of society, are celebrated as a universal defense against despair and oppression. In “A Drop in the Bucket,” undoubtedly based upon the socialist activities of her friend Sarah Cleghorn, Canfield recounts how the tales of a socialist shoemaker prompted a politically conservative Hillsboro woman to journey to Chicago to save a number of victims of social and political oppression and bring them back to the rural idyll of Vermont. Influenced by Cleghorn’s social reform activities and her father’s devotion to the amelioration of prison conditions and the abolition of child labor, Canfield found *Hillsboro People* a clumsy attempt at making a decisive difference in the way in which the strong treat the weak. Her desire to initiate social change, particularly for the silent oppressed, was centered in the democratic principles of respect for the individual and collective worth of the common man.

Like Willa Cather, Canfield regarded the growing view of the common man as a mechanical tool in an industrial world as a threat to the value of the individual. It therefore is not surprising that her stories based upon her experiences in France, collected in *Home Fires in France* and *The Day of Glory*, are not only representative of her desire to effect social and political change for the oppressed, but more importantly, they remove the language of war from the industrial, mechanical, urban to the domestic, artistic, rural. In Bakhtinian terms, Canfield’s internally persuasive language, rooted in the domestic and rural landscapes, moves away from first stage propaganda of purpose and therapeutic reconfiguration toward an appeal to intellectual, emotional and moral response to shield

the oppressed from the mechanized advances of the oppressor; and the arena in which the masses, particularly American masses, will respond to the threat of the invader is when the domestic or feminine arena is in jeopardy.

By August 1914, technology and invention had created an industrial world view wherein the inventor, architect, and industrialist had become the cultural icons of American society. The years immediately preceding had been the era of the Wright Brothers, Henry Ford, the Chicago School of architecture and J. P. Morgan. American society was consumed with a spirit of production, labor and work. Human individuality and worth gave way to a view of the individual as a machine, a unit of production, in industrial technological terms. It therefore is not surprising that the language of World War I was a wholly mechanized, industrial and impersonal one, grounded in the view of man as machine. As Thomas A. Edison opined in 1915, “if the United States engages in [World War I], it will be a war in which machines, not soldiers, fight. The new soldier will not be a soldier, but a machinist [who] will not bleed on the battlefield; he will sweat in the factory.”<sup>30</sup> What Edison did not know then was that the new soldier who would “sweat in the factory” would be the American woman, and thus the language of war would not only move from the nineteenth-century apocalyptic reaction to the Civil War reflected in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and the terror of technology in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, to a radical social change wherein the domestic or feminine becomes merged with or firmly implanted within the mechanical and industrial world view. Work no longer is identified with a certain environment, landscape or even gender. Work or labor becomes a universal that, in its omnipresence, is



integral to not only human existence, but central to language and indeed the language of war. Thus, the rhetoric of war propaganda in 1916 moves away from nationalism and duty to a sense of war as the new workplace, “an image of a gigantic labor process”<sup>31</sup> where the aim of production is to build an edifice to not only protect against but crush the competing monopolizer.

Paul Fussell points out how the trenches of the Western Front were constructed not only as places of work, but also as domestic environments, wherein soldiers were workers, each one a production unit. The merger of home front workplace and war front trench becomes a complete one.

But a less formal way of identifying sections of trench was by place or street names with a distinctly London flavor. *Piccadilly* was a favorite; popular also were *Regent Street* and *Strand*; junctions were *Hyde Park Corner* and *Marble Arch* . . . Explaining military routines to civilian readers, Ian Hay labors to give the impression that the real trenches are identical to the exhibition ones and that they are properly described in the language of normal domesticity a bit archly deployed:

The firing-trench is our place of business - our office in the city, so to speak. The supporting trench is our suburban residence, whither the weary toiler may betake himself periodically (or, more correctly, in relays) for purposes of refreshment and repose.

The reality was different. The British trenches were wet, cold, smelly, and thoroughly squalid.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the day, the men cleaned weapons and repaired those parts of the trench damaged during the night. The officers inspected, encouraged, and strolled about looking nonchalant to inspire the men. Daily “returns” of the amount of ammunition and the quantity of trench stores had to be made. Wiring parties repaired the wire in front of the position. Digging parties extended saps toward the enemy. Carrying parties brought up

not just rations and mail but the heavy engineering materials needed for the constant repair and improvement of the trenches: timbers, A-frames, duckboards, stakes and wire, corrugated iron, sandbags, tarpaulins, pumping equipment. Bombs and ammunition and flares were carried forward. All this ant-work was illuminated brightly from time to time by German flares and interrupted very frequently by machine gun or artillery fire. Meanwhile night patrols and raiding parties were busy in No Man's Land.<sup>32</sup>

The work of war in the trenches adhered to a pattern of demand and supply, played out in a "wet, cold, smelly and thoroughly squalid" environment reminiscent of Dickens' London. The soldier, the ant worker, was but a cog in the machinery of warfare, laboring under the official nonchalant eye of the supervisor who reigns over the industrial, urban-inspired environment of the oppressed subscriber to propaganda rhetoric.

Canfield had long rebelled against America's love affair with industrialism, capitalism and runaway technology. She held fast to the belief that progress or change must come from within rather than outside the individual and that environment does not shape the individual, but rather the manner in which the inner spirit, once called upon, can rise to greatness regardless of physical circumstance. In this way, Canfield set herself apart from other writers of the contemporary school of naturalism, particularly Sinclair Lewis whom she felt "takes a rather superficial view of human problems, but knows how to write a mighty good novel."<sup>33</sup> Unlike Lewis, whose works reflect a sense of the individual's impotency or powerlessness when confronted by an oppressor society, Canfield believed that the individual, although threatened by the way in which war objectifies the individual as a nameless, faceless commodity, has an innate ability to

overcome an oppressive environment through self-determination, the will to throw off one's shackles and collective effort.

Self-determination and collectivity permeate Canfield's early war sketches, which were later collected and published by Henry Holt in 1918 in the single volume *Home Fires in France*. Here Canfield continually draws parallels between French and American customs, not with the purpose of establishing distinctions as many critics have suggested, but more importantly, to arouse American sympathy for the French and Belgian people and to present a propagandized rhetoric to suggest that what happens to one, indeed happens to all. The overall sense of *Home Fires in France* is Donnean in its theme that no man is an island, and whereas the rights of the individual should be safeguarded at any cost.

"The Refugee: A Narrative of the Suffering of Invaded France" appeared on September 19, 1917 in *Outlook*. Although it is the most overlooked and underrated of Canfield's collected sketches, it is representative of the collection as a whole, for it revolves around one French woman who "just before the war [could] have stood for the very type and symbol of the intelligent, modern woman [but] now, after less than three years of separation [is] white-haired, gaunt, shabby, grayish brown."<sup>34</sup> Recounted as reportage, the unnamed refugee relates the manner in which French and Belgian women who have escaped from the enemy, must remain silent as to the particulars of living an oppressed existence so as to protect those who still are imprisoned. Yet Canfield must have the refugee speak so that "the hideous nightmare up there in Belgium and in the invaded provinces of France"<sup>35</sup> may be passed on to the American public. Canfield

pierces the veil of feminine silence and, in doing so, establishes the manner in which the reportage of war by women writers differs from that of men.

In her study of war in contemporary Arab literature, Miriam Cooke suggests how women writing of war differ from their male counterparts.

By acknowledging chaos, the women presented the situation as out of control and urged each individual to assume responsibility for ending the war. Responsibility in the women's writings entailed *duties* towards others, duties that had to be fulfilled so that the war might stop. In the men's writings, responsibility adhered to a notion of *rights*: protagonists protected what was theirs against others. After disavowing chaos, the men transformed it into the clarity of friend and foe.<sup>36</sup>

Canfield's refugee protagonist recounts the chaos exacted by the German invaders in ransacking Belgian orphanages suspected of harboring

patriotic French recitations, the endless stream of wounded French soldiers ineptly treated in improvised hospitals on their way to German prisons, the clubbing of old women who tried to toss food to the prisoners, the children who stretched out handfuls of chocolate, the white-haired men who thrust cigarettes into the pockets of the torn, stained French uniforms.<sup>37</sup>

In creating a personal voice, a vehicle of firsthand reportage, Canfield establishes herself as imbued with the investigative gaze of the reporter urgent to inform and educate the American public of the French home-front condition. There is no effort to create a purposeful nationalistic propaganda here, but rather the motivation is to present a canvas upon which is painted a picture of war as cruel and futile for the noncombatant. There exists no glory, only suffering and devastation for the common man.

Canfield's purpose in writing this as well as all the remaining sketches in *Home Fires in France* was, through combining the genres of fiction and memoir, to elicit

understanding, sympathy and aid from those who had not experienced the home front deprivations and horrors of war to those who had. Her publisher's note to the volume proves noteworthy.

This book is *fiction* written in France out of a life-long familiarity with the French and two years' intense experience in war work in France. It is a *true setting forth* of personalities and experiences, French and American, under the influence of war. It tells what war has done to the French people *at home*. In a recent letter, the author said, "What I write is about such very well-known conditions to us that it is hard to remember it may be fresh to you, but it is so far short of the actual conditions that it seems pretty pale, after all." <sup>38</sup> (Emphasis added)

In blending truth with fiction and locating the hybridized result firmly within the realm of the home, the sphere traditionally characterized by female nurture and the peaceful hearth of the home fire, Canfield juxtaposes images of peace with war and establishes the manner in which second stage propaganda relies upon images of mothers and domesticity to elicit the individual's response to the call to arms. Whereas Brooke's poetry is a propaganda designed and imbued with the aim of eliciting nationalistic solidarity, Canfield's objective is to elicit economic and emotional aid through the common or international domestic politic, rooted in the strength and dignity of ordinary people.

The "home fires" are the private or peaceful environments in both France and America, and Canfield often merges the two in an attempt not only to explain one culture to the other, but to create such a reconciliation of their differences that solidarity moves away from the national to the international. War, therefore, becomes an experience of a non-gendered common denominator and thus is deserving of and must elicit

understanding and sympathy as a universal threat to familial domestic tranquility and sanctity.

The first sketch in the collection, “Notes from a French Village in the War Zone,” first appeared in *Harper’s* in March 1918 as “Young America and Old France.” Canfield obviously opted for placing this sketch first in the collection rather than “The Refugee” so as to establish from the beginning that the domestic home fires of France would serve as the vehicle ultimately to educate the American public of the universality of the war experience playing out in the French and Belgium domestic landscape. The narrator is an American woman who acts as cultural and historical interpreter to a company of “our boys” who have come to France from Ohio, Connecticut, California, Virginia. Canfield immediately establishes a contrast between the span of historical experience of the two countries. With wide-eyed wonder, these

New World youth . . . were never done marveling that the sun should have fallen across Crouy streets at the same angle before Columbus discovered America as today; that at the time of the French Revolution just as now, the big boys and sturdy men of Crouy should have left the same fields which now lie golden in the sun and have gone out to repel the invader; that people looked up from drawing water at the same fountain which now sparkles under the sycamore trees and saw Catherine de Midici pass on her way north as now they see the gray American ambulance rattle by . . . .<sup>39</sup>

As Mark Madigan points out, for Dorothy Canfield Fisher, “writing was the chief means for making a decisive difference in the world, for educating her fellow citizens, for promulgating moral principles, for initiating social change.”<sup>40</sup> The role of the knowledgeable narrator in this sketch, Canfield’s alter ego, delights in explaining to these young and provincialistic American doughboys, who assert the American way is the best

and most democratic for all, the customs of this representative French village have an advantage to all in their socialistically domestic and economic approach. The American perception of all of Europe as a densely populated urban sprawl is countered by the narrator's recitation of how families who work in the fields as farmers live in the villages and go out to the fields each day. Such an arrangement, unlike the isolated farmers of the American Midwest, eliminates isolation, for "there is no isolation possible here, when, to shake hands with the woman of the next farm, you have only to lean out of your front window and have her lean out of hers."<sup>41</sup> Canfield's use of the word "isolation" would not have been lost to American readers who were ever mindful of the Wilson/Roosevelt debates concerning America's involvement in the war, and the close proximity of one farm woman to another mirrors the proximity of French to Germans and that it will be women, within the domestic environment, who extend the hand of truce.

The narrator's ethnological message continues as the rationale for the division of domestic work is explained. The communal nature of French village life, devoid of American isolationism, eliminates the duplication of domestic work found in American communities. A single *boulangerie* bakes the bread for the entire community; a single shop provides cooked foods, such as ham, too time-consuming and difficult to prepare at home; a common *lavoir* exists for the laundering of one's wash; and the *établissement des bains* eliminates the need for each individual home to bear the capital outlay to buy, install and maintain a bathroom of one's own. In the end, Canfield's desire to bridge the gap between the differences of French and American domestic landscapes is accomplished by "the boy from Illinois" who concludes that "the thing we want to do at home is to keep all

the good ways of doing this we've got already, and then add all the French ones too.”<sup>42</sup> American isolationism, unlike the sociable community life of French villages where “if one of the children breaks his arm, or if a horse has the colic, or your chimney gets on fire, you do not suffer the anguished isolation of American country life,”<sup>43</sup> is presented as dangerous, inefficient, economically impractical. But Canfield's protracted description of the French domestic environment, as seen through the eyes of raw American doughboy recruits, succeeds in its aim of demystifying the other, while finding a common emotional and sociological ground where American readers can begin to identify with, if not yet totally respond to, the dangers of American isolationism.

As Yvonne M. Klein suggests, the basic condition of war that unites all women is loss.<sup>44</sup> Women, because of their symbolic if not realistic association with the home fires of hearth and nurture, respond to conditions of loss with an instinctual desire to reproduce that which has been taken, protect that which is threatened, mend that which has been broken, and preserve that which is in danger of becoming lost. But inherent in the concept of loss is memory and recovery, and the existing canon of World War I literature tends to be replete with the former and pitifully devoid of the latter. Women, like history itself, have been the harbingers of memory, and their role in the tedious and often lonely task of effecting recovery and restoration have only recently been celebrated in any historical or literary studies. Painfully few of the diaries and memoirs of women relief workers in Belgium and France, who recorded the efforts of thousands to bring restoration to a devastated homeland, have been included in the canon of Great War literature.



The first two years of the Great War wreaked atrocities not only upon the men of the trenches, but also upon thousands of the women, children and old men of Belgium and France who, deemed not to be able-bodied laborers, were displaced from their homeland by the invading German armies. The constant stream of deported refugees, visited upon by starvation and epidemics, flowed faster than the ability of existing relief agencies to keep pace. Thousands had become homeless.

In the fall of 1914, Mary King Waddington, a seventy-year-old American expatriate living in Paris, established the Mme. Waddington Relief Fund for the refugees who were pouring into Paris, and an *ouvoir* or workroom enterprise that employed out-of-work and destitute French women. Waddington took in

not only soldier's wives, but quantities of young women and girls left with no work and no money. It is always the same story with that class in Paris. They spend all they earn on their backs. Three or four of them club together and have a good room, and they live *au jour de jour* [day-to-day], putting nothing aside. In our rooms, we could easily employ sixty, perhaps more, women, given them fr. 1.50 a day, and one good meal. They could work all day, making clothes for the sick, the wounded and the refugees.<sup>45</sup>

American women responded to Mme. Waddington's entreaties for monetary support, but by January 1915, with her estate depleted and in desperate need of able-bodied assistants, Mme. Waddington quite astonishingly set about enlarging her relief work.

Our stuffs are giving out, and our poor women increasing in number. Some of them look too awful, half starved and half clothed. I didn't like to ask one poor thing who came with two children, both practically babies, four weeks and one year old, if she had any clothes on under her dress - I don't think she had. She knew nothing of her husband; had had no news since the

beginning of December . . . . We must start a Women and Children's Department - and have ordered from London a thousand yards of flannel and a thousand of cotton.<sup>46</sup>

By the spring of 1916, Mme. Waddington's relief enterprise cared for a constant influx of refugees, provided schooling for their children, shipped packages of clothing items to soldiers at the front, and managed a clinic for the ill and wounded. Such relief work was accomplished not only monetarily, but through physical volunteerism of hundreds of American women who traversed the submarine-infested Atlantic. With the publication of "A Little Kansas Leaven: First of a Series of True and Tenderly Sympathetic Stories of the Great War" in *Pictorial Review*, Dorothy Canfield memorialized the recovery and relief work of Mary King Waddington.

Faced with the difficulty of presenting the reality of relief work conditions to an American public devoid of any firsthand knowledge or historic memory, Canfield relies upon American history and its inherent romance to frame "A Little Kansas Leaven." The story opens with a genealogical study of the Boardman family whose distant English patriarch emigrated with his wife and young children "to the New World between 1620 and 1630." His great-great grandson, Elmer Boardman, fought for American independence in 1775, as would his grandson, Peter, against slavery. This thumbnail sketch of a familial heritage centered on fighting for those oppressed introduces Canfield's protagonist, Ellen Boardman, who in August 1914, finds her station in life as a twenty-seven-year-old stenographer in Marshalltown, Kansas to not only be unfulfilling, but inconsequential in a world being torn asunder. Ellen's belief that the United States should render immediate economic and military aid to France and Belgium because "the Belgians

kept their promise and the Germans didn't" is the voice of Canfield issuing the Donnean warning that what happens to one indeed can happen to all.

In early 1915, progressive reformers were staunchly opposed to any American arms build-up. At a Women's Peace Party rally on November 15, 1915, its founder, Crystal Eastman, urged that all pacifists come together against the growing demands on Congress to approve military preparedness appropriations. Yet, for many women, the pacifist stance of resisting any form of militarism was rapidly eroding as it became clear that any attempts to convince anyone in Congress that no appropriation, no matter how minuscule, be approved, would meet with resounding defeat. Pragmatically speaking, if the Women's Peace Party held to its original stance of absolute pacifism and isolationism, it would be voted out of existence by the growing majority who felt the question of involvement must be left to the individual. This debate between isolationism or pacifism and individual involvement is reflected early on in "A Little Kansas Leaven" as Maggie, Ellen's cousin and Canfield's voice of pacifist isolationism, responds with horror to Ellen's stance of American military assistance to Belgium and France.

*Ellen Boardman, would you want Americans to commit murder? . . . I don't know what's got into you, Ellen Boardman. You look actually queer, these days! What do you care so much for the Belgians for? You never heard of them before all this began! And everyone knows how immoral French people are (emphasis in original).<sup>47</sup>*

Ellen defends her response to the plight of Belgium through an analogy of the moral and instinctual response of overcoming a burglar who traverses her own and Maggie's bedrooms in order to bludgeon and possibly murder a neighbor. Even uninformed Maggie understands that the analogous neighbor is France and Belgium is

their bedrooms through which the criminal is marching. In superimposing the domestic environment upon the battlefield and drawing parallels between those whose landscape is truly threatened and those who can only imagine such a threat, Canfield welds the propaganda of purpose and duty with that of volunteerism to protect the other lest it ultimately visit one's own domain.

So consumed by her conviction of Germany's unjust invasion of Belgium, Ellen withdraws her life savings and sails to France to volunteer as a relief worker. Although Canfield's sketch yields various implausibilities in the manner in which Ellen easily locates a YWCA in Paris where she is immediately directed to "a bunch of society dames trying to get up a vestiaire for refugees,"<sup>48</sup> and the language therein at times seems overly sentimental and floral to our post-modern sensibilities, one must applaud the author's deftness in blurring the hitherto distinctive lines between fiction and nonfiction. Canfield's sketch of an orphaned, nondescript girl from the Midwest who ultimately rises to heroic proportions in the eyes of her townspeople who once regarded her as emotionally unstable, demonstrates how maternalistic language, or that which is seemingly pacifist or siding with the oppressed rather than the oppressor, is internally persuasive when posited in the realm of the domestic. Canfield further merges the paternalistically charged domain of the masculine sphere of war with the most maternalistic of all--childbirth--to impart an idea that within the arena of war and oppression and death, women, as givers of life and nurture, play a crucial, if not sanctifying, role. As Ellen assists a young French woman in childbirth whose husband has departed for the Front, she sheds both tears of thanksgiving and remorse "because

another man-child had been born into the world.”<sup>49</sup> It is man and his language, the paternalistic language of authoritative and historically tried and true discourse, that seemingly creates for woman a *raison d'être* within the war zone, but it is ultimately man and his language that wields the power and potential to destroy not only himself, but that from which he was created.

Canfield acknowledges that war is a paternalistic discourse and women, in participating in and becoming a part of that discourse in more than a transient or superficial degree, can only succeed by adopting pre-war male positions of production while simultaneously making them their own under cover of the domestic sphere. Many critics have asserted that childbirth is a predominant theme in women's Great War literature as it underscores the inherent, albeit simplistically obvious, juxtaposition of male destruction and female creation, and it gives future validity to women as war heroes because their greatest good and service to their countries is to repopulate a decimated population. Most surprisingly, such a view of women as little more than breeding stock was prompted in paternalistically religious and patriotic propaganda rhetoric by many women writers, and particularly Mabel Potter Daggett, a Progressive reformer and leading proponent of eugenics.

After the battles are won and man's work of conquest is done, women's war work will only have begun . . . everyone of these men once was builded with such exquisite art and such infinite labour and such toilsome pain and anguish by God and a woman! It is a stupendous task of creation to be done over again when the armies shall have finished their work. Bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, God and woman must rebuild the race . . . . Not a captain of industry who assembles the engines of war, not a general who directs the armies, may do for his country what you can do who stands beside its cradles. The

cry that rings out over Empires bleeding in the throes of death is  
the oldest cry in the world. Women wanted for maternity!<sup>50</sup>

The attitude that women's greatest war work was maternity arose out of a growing public concern in the early months of 1916 that single American women who went to Europe to perform relief work and those who found newly created factory employment in the industrial Northeast would not find matrimony and motherhood a noble calling after the war years. Chief among those private and public organizations that opposed both voluntary and paid war relief work for women was the New York City Women's Peace Party. Its resounding opposition was, in large part, due to its belief that any form of war work served only to legitimize a militaristic American society. Members of the NYC-WPP argued that all women stand opposed to the destruction of all life and that, as givers of life and nurturers, the fruit they bear becomes both the oppressors and the oppressed in war. Madeleine Z. Doty, in her short story, "Die Mutter: A True Story," enlarged the scope of motherhood as a personal or national experience to a political or global experience affecting all of civilization. In describing a German mother's reaction to the death of her son, Doty blurs national and political demarcations, and the death of one becomes the death of all.

All men are our sons . . . I long to take you in my arms and lay  
your head upon my breast to make you feel through me your  
kinship with all the earth . . . Perhaps women more than men  
have been to blame for this world war. We did not think of the  
world's children, our children. The baby hands that clutched  
our breasts were so sweet, we forgot the hundred other baby  
hands stretched out to us. But the Earth does not forget, she  
mothers all.<sup>51</sup>

The construct of women as pacifists because they give life and men as warmongers because they do not experience childbirth is an overly simplistic one that neatly establishes what many critics assert lies at the root of most Great War literature by women, i.e., women write about home, childbirth and nurture while men write about invasions, battles and maneuvers. Because of this generally unexamined given that childbirth and nurture are recurrent themes in women's war literature, it is not surprising that the protagonist's giving birth amidst an enemy invasion in Canfield's sketch "La Pharmacienne" is often interpreted as a statement of the theme that women create and men destroy. However, such a pat interpretation fails to consider the broader import of the story as a study of how war is an experience that either creates a sense of purpose within the individual or, if the individual is irrevocably weak and without moral purpose, destroys the basics of character through annihilation of one's immediate environment. Canfield regarded "La Pharmacienne" as the best of the sketches in *Home Fires in France* precisely because of its expression of the manner in which character and action come to life. Writing to her publisher, Paul Reynolds, she described it as

a study of a Frenchwoman, typical nice, housekeeper, good-mother variety, who is hard hit by the war, living in the war zone, and is little by little transformed out of being a house-cat into being one of the stern, unconsciously heroic obscure heroines of France. To my mind the study has value because nobody has said a word yet about the *processes* by which all this unexpected heroism has been evolved out of the French people. There has been a great deal of exclaiming and admiring, but I have a notion that most Americans don't *realize* by what hard and bitter and horrible phases the Frenchwomen have had to pass before they emerged from being just nice home-keepers into being guardians of the public weal, as they are to so great an extent in the deserted villages and towns. And I don't think American women realize at all how many of the

little prettinesses of life the French women have had to leave behind, and leave behind forever - I don't think ever they can be so foolishly important as before. All this, I find, can't be said, even using suggestion every so freely in a short sketch.<sup>52</sup>

“La Pharmacienne” originally appeared in *Pictorial Review* in September 1918 and was included in *Home Fires in France* as the final sketch in the collection. However, in 1956, Canfield retitled the sketch “Through Pity and Terror” for inclusion in *A Harvest of Stories*, a collection edited by the author two years before her death. The change of title is instructive in determining authorial intent. Canfield's tale is not, as most assert, a diatribe on the weary belief that women create and men destroy, but rather its emphasis is focused on how the plight of Belgian refugees and the unparalleled slaughter and decimation of military personnel and all civilians, is tragedy. Both the original title, “La Pharmacienne,” which signifies a professional or public sphere in which the protagonist is located, and the latter title, “Through Pity and Terror” which alludes to tragedy, lend credence to the assertion that Canfield desired not only to educate American readers as to the plight of many women and children in occupied France, but, more importantly, to remind her readers, through the classical mode of a tragedy that elicits pity and fear (terror), that the sorrow and loss of one is the sorrow and loss of all. As Madeleine Brismantier, Canfield's heroine, devolves from a woman of exceptional social standing and comfort to one who is reduced to accepting the charity of those she once considered her inferiors, the American reader experiences a catharsis while at the same time a sense of guilt for her country's blind eye.

If “La Pharmacienne” was intended as a morality piece, the protagonist's tragic flaw, or *hamartia*, must be equally common to American audiences. The flaw here is a



moral one, the hubris of overweening pride and isolationist snobbery. Madeleine's obsession with the accumulation of material wealth and maintaining a spotless home and perfect children becomes her religion and she finds nothing lacking in that religion. It is when her husband is called to the Front and the invading German army occupies her home as a command post that Canfield's protagonist falls from a state of perceived grace and, without the accouterments of servants and "all the little pettinesses of life," begins the task of refashioning her self-image and rebuilding the landscape of the self. Canfield's intent is to demonstrate the dignity and strength of the human spirit when confronting overwhelming misfortune and to point out that holding oneself apart from and above others is a tragic flaw that will bring one to potential ruin. Madeleine's unexpected reversal of fortune becomes a universal one and the mode of redemption manifests itself in the relief work she undertakes in providing medical supplies to not only her fellow townspeople, but her oppressor as well.

In merging the domestic landscape of feminine care and nurture with the war landscape of masculine military occupation, Canfield successfully blurs the traditional gender identifications and creates a new arena in which human dignity and compassion transcend the staid political and ideological theories of the past and bring both Americans and French readers to a sense of solidarity of purpose and experience. Canfield thus becomes the very epitome of Joseph Conrad's definition of the artist:

Confronted by the same enigmatical spectacle the artist descends within himself, and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal. His appeal is made to our less obvious capacities: to that part of our nature which, because of the warlike conditions of existence, is necessarily kept out of sight within the more

resisting and hard qualities--like the vulnerable body within a steel armor. His appeal is less loud, more profound, less distinct, more stirring--and sooner forgotten. Yet its effect endures forever. The changing wisdom of successive generations discards ideas, questions, facts, demolishes theories. But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent upon wisdom; to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition and, therefore, more permanently enduring. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity--the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.<sup>53</sup>

By spring 1916, all hope that this European war would be quickly concluded was dashed. Close to one million German soldiers, backed up by more than 2,000 pieces of heavy artillery, assaulted the French line near the ancient fortress of Verdun. As the countryside exploded into a desolate landscape of charred ruin and death, French and German soldiers killed one another with such ease and futility that the very word “Verdun” became a metaphor for the impersonality and pointless slaughter of modern warfare.<sup>54</sup> The toll of the dead and wounded reached never before known numbers on the battlefields, but the price paid by the refugees exacted a greater drain on the civilian populace. It would be over a year before American soldiers would arrive in the trenches, but already American women, responding to the stories Dorothy Canfield sent home, had sailed to France to establish hospitals, clinics, schools and hostels. Canfield’s appeal to American women to respond was not couched in the propaganda of war as a sense of personal duty, but rather in the rhetoric of participation in war as a means to translate the established gendered landscape of the domestic into a broader sphere where nationality

and sexuality give way to the universality of all human experience. It is in the language of the domestic that Canfield demonstrates how women of the early twentieth century can create a new language, a new discourse, which seemingly imbued with the feminine signifiers of home and hearth moves beyond the boundaries of gender and political ideology and gives birth to the awareness that the experience of one is the experience of all.

In what has often been dubbed the central manifesto of French feminism, Helene Cixous asserts that the majority of discourse is masculine or paternalistic in intention and thus anti-female. Such paternalistic language represents positive, or what Bakhtin described as authoritative, terms that if not actually kill, at least attempt to kill, feminine or passive rhetoric. Writing in 1975 in *Laugh of the Medusa*, Cixous issues the rallying cry that it is time to rise up against the perceived modes of masculine suppression.

If woman has always functioned “within” the discourse of man, it is time for her to dislocate this “within,” to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it into her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. And you’ll see with what ease she will spring from that “within”--the “within” where once she so drowsily couched.<sup>55</sup>

The obvious question issuing forth is “how” and Cixous offers no response. Her 1975 treatise appears to express the erroneous assertion that women functioning “within the discourse of men” until that point in time have not yet devised or employed a language that allows them “to get inside the discourse” and make it their own. In successfully entering and reinventing the traditional sphere of the masculine discourse of war propaganda, Dorothy Canfield brought the language of war into the sphere of domestic

landscape, and then successfully blurred the arbitrary distinctions of masculine and feminine which Cixous and other radicals of French feminism contend still exist.

Dorothy Canfield Fisher brought to bear upon American consciousness the intellectual and emotional awareness that the potential for invasion of even the isolationist's personal and physical landscape is very real. But America, in 1916, remained militarily or paternalistically, uncommitted. Although Canfield had successfully brought the domestic within the borders of the public, it would not be until after July 1, 1916, the bloodiest day in military history, that the literature of war would reflect a new propaganda of widespread loss that ultimately calls into question the truth of paternalistic or authoritative language.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Gompers in *The Annals*, Vol. LXI, 4010, September 1915.

<sup>2</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, August 13, 1914, p. 8, col. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, August 14, 1914, p. 4, col. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Alba B. Johnson in *The Annals*, Vol. LXI, September 1915.

<sup>5</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *America and the World War* (Toronto: McLeod and Allen, 1915), p. xv.

<sup>7</sup> Bakhtin, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Erika A. Kuhlman, *Petticoats and White Feathers: Gender Conformity, Race, the Progressive Peace Movement, and the Debate Over War, 1895-1919* (Westport (CT): Greenwood Press, 1997), pp. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), xi.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Dorothy Canfield Fisher used her maiden name, Dorothy Canfield, when writing works of fiction and her full married name for non-fiction work. For the purposes of discussing the short stories collected in *Home Fires in France*, I have referred to her by her maiden name-the name under which the stories were published.

<sup>13</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War* (London: Constable and Co., 1965), p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Deland, *Small Things* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1919), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Judith Freeman Clark, *Almanac of American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987), p. 28.

<sup>17</sup> Dorothy Goldman with Jane Gledhill and Judith Hattaway, *Women Writers and the Great War* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Celine Sibut, December 9, 1915 Wilbur Collection of the University of Vermont.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Celine Sibut, March 8, 1916, Wilbur Collection of the University of Vermont.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Blanche Sibut, March 14, 1916, Wilbur Collection of the University of Vermont.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Celine Sibut, April 12, 1916, Wilbur Collection of the University of Vermont.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Paul Reynolds, November 24, 1916, Wilbur Collection of the University of Vermont.

<sup>25</sup> Sarah N. Cleghorn, *Threescore: The Autobiography of Sarah N. Cleghorn*, with an Introduction by Robert Frost (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1936), p.178.

<sup>26</sup> Dorothy Canfield Fisher, "A Pyrrhic Victory," *Everybody's Magazine*, 1907.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Sarah Cleghorn, May 2, 1918, Wilbur Collection of the University of Vermont.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 70.

<sup>29</sup> Emile Zola, *La Bête Humain*, trans. L. W. Tancock (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 319.

<sup>30</sup> *The New York Times*, 16 October 1915, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ernest Junger, "Total Mobilization," in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolen (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), p. 126.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 42-43, 47.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Alfred Harcourt, November 10, 1920, Wilbur Collection of the University of Vermont.

<sup>34</sup> Dorothy Canfield, *Home Fires in France* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1918), p. 111.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>36</sup> Miriam Cooke, *Women and the War Story* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Dorothy Canfield, *Homes Fires in France*, p. 116.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ii.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Mark J. Madigan, "Dorothy Canfield Fisher," *Legacy*. Vol. 9, No. 1, 1992, 54.

<sup>41</sup> Dorothy Canfield, *Home Fires in France*, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Yvonne M. Klein, ed. *Beyond the Home Front: Women's Autobiographical Writing of Two World Wars* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Mary King Waddington, *My War Diary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>47</sup> Dorothy Canfield, *Home Fires in France*, pp. 136-37.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>50</sup> Mabel Potter Daggett, *Women Wanted: The Story Written in Blood Red Letters on the Horizon of the Great War* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), p. 267.

<sup>51</sup> Madeline Z. Doty, "Die Mutter: A True Story," *Four Lights*, 24 March 1917, Women's Peace Party Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Paul Reynolds, November 24, 1916, Wilbur Collection of the University of Vermont.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Conrad. *The Nigger of the "Narcissus": A Tale of the Sea* (London: J. M. Dent, 1929), xviii.

<sup>54</sup> Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), p. 28.

<sup>55</sup> Helene Cixous. "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (Summer 1976), 1(4): 878.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Transgression and Transection in the Forbidden Zone**

The violence of waking life disrupts the  
order of our death. Strange dreams occur,  
for dreams are licensed as they never were.

-----Louis Simpson

By the end of 1915, the Great War consumed all of Europe like some marauding beast whose insatiable appetite could not be placated. It devoured men and machines, money and morale, while the four Great Powers at war against Germany remained allies in name only. There existed no systematic sharing of information or coordination of combined strategic maneuvers. But changes in the military and political leadership of Britain and France in December 1915 would set in motion a catastrophic chain of events that would not only demystify the myth of war as a grand and glorious noble calling, but create a canon of third stage propaganda literature that inverts not only the individual's response to the threat of the invading other, but, more pointedly, upends the previously existing social, ideological and gendered moorings of society.

On December 3, 1915, General Joseph Joffre became the commander-in-chief of all French forces on the Western Front. He quickly called for a military conference of all the Allied forces at his headquarters in Chantilly to plan a major offensive on the Western Front in 1916. The Allied conference produced widespread accord that simultaneous offensives must be launched against the Germans on the Western, Eastern and Italian Fronts. But, the resolution was beyond the capabilities of its authors. The Italians lacked sufficient human and mechanical resources to launch an offensive capable of distracting



the Germans from the Western Front. The Russians had experienced such staggering losses during the fall of 1915 that long-range offensive planning was beyond their political, military or emotional abilities. But Joffre remained nonplussed by the impotence of Italy and Russia, and turned his attentions solely to the Western Front which he believed was the key to ending the war within a year.

On December 17, 1915, Field Marshal Sir John French was dismissed as commander-in-chief of the British Expeditionary Force and replaced by General Sir Douglas Haig. French had directed all operations in France and Belgium, and disastrously so, perhaps because he held to the nineteenth-century concepts of warfare that had brought him success during the Second Boer War, but were painfully ineffectual against the Germans. French frequently argued with his superior, Lord Kitchener, and refused to coordinate his strategies with those of French Commanders. Prompted by Joffre's insistence that success on the Western Front be secured at any cost, the highly aggressive and decisive Haig became convinced that an all-out offensive could succeed in driving the Germans home. On December 29, 1915, Joffre and Haig met to plot the strategy for an attack along the Somme River, one that would forever link Haig's name not only to the blackest day in British military history, but to the advent of the age of Western modern literature.

While Joffre and Haig were planning this offensive along the Somme River, German Chief of Staff, Erick von Falkenhayn, outlined to Kaiser Wilhelm II a deceptively simple plan of action designed "to bleed France white" and demoralize Britain. The thrust of Falkenhayn's plan was to launch a limited offensive at a single location deemed so vital

to France and her history that France would devote all her manpower to defending the position. Resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, launched against British shipping interests, would so undercut Britain's industrial prowess and maritime power that the resultant demoralization would destroy the foundation of the Allied Powers alliance against Germany. The thrust of the attack in France would be Verdun.

Verdun was a fortress town located in a bend in the River Meuse. It had been an important garrison in that area since Roman times and had been the last of the French fortified cities to fall to the Germans during the Franco-Prussian War. The town was surrounded by a double circle of large forts and medium-sized fortifications, amid seemingly impenetrable hills and gorges through which the Meuse flowed. The outermost configuration of forts, Fort Vaux and Fort Douaumont, were the cornerstone of defense against any invader. Strengthened with reinforced concrete and armored plates, the forts guarded against invader passage through the river valley and loomed protectively over the key Verdun railroad junction that connected important southern, western and northern points in France.

But since the fall of Liege and Antwerp in 1914, the defense of Verdun had been neglected once the outer forts were destroyed by German cannon fire. The French high command considered forts an outmoded form of defense and therefore ordered that they be dismantled and their guns transported to other more useful locations on the Western Front. Thus, in early 1916, only a small garrison of thirty-four French battalions protected Verdun. Joffre reassured the commander at Verdun that the city was not a possible target of the German offensive.

On February 21, 1916, the heaviest bombing thus far in the war began to rain over Verdun. The entire civilian population was evacuated as the bombardment turned the city into an inferno. French trenches were completely destroyed; infantrymen were buried alive under tons of pulverized earth or thrown by the terrible force of the exploding ordnance into the limbs of ancient trees now uprooted. The German attacks were less effective than expected, and the utilization of the German flame-thrower was less successful than anticipated. By nightfall, only the Bois d'Haumont had fallen to the invader, and the German war machine was losing power. But, by nightfall of the second day of fighting, the villages of Haumont and the Bois des Caures had been taken by the Germans. Only the Bois de l'Herbebois remained in French control, yet French headquarters failed to respond to the impending seriousness of the attacks.

On Wednesday, February 23, 1916, the situation grew to critical proportions as the French second and third lines of defense fell, leaving little resistance to the German advancement. At French headquarters, Joffre was advised that Verdun was on the brink of falling to the enemy. Two days later, Fort Douaumont fell, prompting Joffre to appoint Henri Philippe Petain as overall commander of Verdun. Petain's rallying cry, "*Ils ne passeront pas!*" ("They shall not pass!"), revitalized the beleaguered French defenders of Verdun; nonetheless, on June 9, Fort Vaux fell to the Germans and Petain recommended withdrawal from the western Meuse line. Joffre refused.

Although some historians, such as Alistair Horne, suggest that the Battle of the Somme had to be launched on July 1, 1916 by the British to save Verdun, initial plans for an offensive had been laid in December 1915, weeks before the assault on Verdun. Haig

was opposed to a battle on the Somme front and preferred Flanders, but succumbing to pressure from Joffre, agreed to the Somme offensive and rescheduled the launching of the attack from mid-August to June 24, 1916.

The British army at the Somme was predominantly fashioned out of new recruits, painfully under-trained, starry-eyed boys who responded to Kitchener's Pals Battalion campaigns. These war novices, who had never seen any real battlefield action, turned a deaf ear to the cynicism of experienced soldiers, and firmly believed that when they climbed out of the trenches and went "over the top," they would advance all the way to Berlin. As the bombardment commenced at dawn on June 24, the noise became deafening and the landscape grew more barren. Seasoned officers perceived the slaughter of man and nature that would be played out. Siegfried Sassoon captured the mood: "Armageddon is too immense for my solitary understanding. I gaze down into the dark green glooms of the weedy little river, but my thoughts are powerless against unhappiness so huge. I am staring at a sunlit picture of Hell."<sup>1</sup>

Over the seven-day period of bombardment, "about 1,500,000 shells from the stocks which had been dumped were fired - 138,000 on 24 June, 375,000 on 30 June."<sup>2</sup> The shelling continued without abatement, with the full thrust of intensity reserved for the final hour before the British would advance onto No Man's Land. G. C. Wynne, a captain in the British army, recounts the last hour in his memoir, *If Germany Attacks*:

At 6:30 a.m., however, [on July 1] a bombardment of intensity as yet unparalleled suddenly burst out again along the whole front. At first it was most severe in the centre, about Thiepval and Beaumont, but it spread quickly over the entire line from north of the Ancre to south of the Somme. For the next hour continuous lines of great fountains of earth, rocks, smoke and

debris, played constantly into the air. The giant explosions of the heaviest shells were the only distinguishable noises in the continuous thunder of the bombardment and short, regular intervals of their bursts gave it a certain rhythm. All trace of the front-trench system was now lost, and, with only a few exceptions, all the telephone cables connecting it with the rear lines and batteries were destroyed, in spite of the six feet depth at which they had been laid. The Germans, in their dug-outs, each with a beltful of hand-grenades, therefore waited ready, rifle in hand, for the bombardment to lift from the front trench to the rear defences. It was of vital importance not to lose a second in reaching the open before the British infantry could arrive at the dugout entrances.<sup>3</sup>

At 7:28 a.m. on July 1, 1916, British and French infantrymen emerged from the trenches and marched forward across No Man's Land where no one had stood since the Christmas Eve truce of 1914. Thirteen British divisions advanced in a solid line, their speed impeded by the 66-pound pack each man carried on his back. As the British made their slow trek across No Man's Land, the Germans had ample time to emerge from their dugouts and man the waiting machine guns. The Germans fired relentlessly; the first British line fell in its tracks, and then the second, the third and the fourth. The crater-torn earth was littered with the bodies of Britain's youth. By early afternoon, those who had survived the first day of the Battle of the Somme were back in their trenches, but upon No Man's Land lay 60,000 casualties--20,000 of them now dead. July 1, 1916 marked the heaviest loss ever suffered in a single day by a British army or any army in World War I. The Germans had yielded only an inconsequential amount of ground, while the young recruits, who envisioned being a part of "the great push to Berlin," lay dead on the chalky ground.

Militarily, the Battle of the Somme was an overwhelming defeat. Designed to wear down the spirit of the German army, the Somme sounded the death knell of the idealism and romantic quest for glory and heroism that had been the impetus for enlistment and volunteerism. Rupert Brooke had been the ideal symbol of the soldier during the first two years of the war, but now, with all innocence gone, the World War I soldier was a fragmented, alienated and subterranean entity whose hope, like his pals, lay torn asunder on the banks of the Somme.

As those on the home front became aware of those sacrificed by Haig and Joffre for no purpose, the hastily improvised propaganda department of Wellington House in Buckingham Gate, London, sought to stem the tide of disillusionment that was growing in both the civilian and military ranks. Wellington House recruited the then well-known poet and novelist John Masefield to provide what only can be regarded as a romanticized, elegiac portrayal of the events of July 1, 1916. In *The Old Front Line*, Masefield offers what appears to be a firsthand, albeit nostalgic, account in the pastoral tradition. Denied access to battalion and individual soldier diaries by officials who felt their contents might be too brutally accurate, Masefield endeavors to create a battlefield environment unscathed by horror and carnage.

In a few years time, when this war is a romance in memory, the soldier looking for his battlefield will find his marks gone. Centre Way, Peel Trench, Monster Alley, and these other paths of glory will be deep under the corn, and the gleaners will sing at Dead Mule Corner. There is nothing now to show that this was one of the tragic places of this war.<sup>4</sup>

Masefield was but one of a growing cadre of prewar novelists recruited by the War Propaganda Bureau to put a positive spin on the catastrophe Haig had orchestrated. John

Buchan, a Scottish novelist and director of Thomas Nelson & Sons publishing house, was commissioned to write an ongoing history of the war in serial form. *Nelson's History of the War*, which first appeared in February 1915 in twenty-four monthly installments, contained historical inaccuracies that reflected Buchan's personal belief in the infallibility of empire.

In late spring 1915, Buchan was selected as one of five War Propaganda Bureau journalists responsible for writing articles for *The Times* and the *Daily News*, designed to maintain support for the war. His coverage of the second Battle of Ypres and the Battle of Loos prompted such a fervor of patriotism amongst young men who flocked to recruiting stations that, in June 1916, Buchan himself was recruited by the British Army to write communiqués and reports for General Haig and other offices assigned to the General Headquarters Staff. Commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Intelligence Corps, Buchan was privy to documents that, had he included in *Nelson's History of the War*, would have presented a more accurate account. However, his close relationship with Haig colored his public, as well as his private, posturings. In a speech given to the press on March 16, 1916, Buchan asserted that the German army was rapidly failing and that an Allied offensive within the next three months would exact such a decisive defeat of the Germans that "this war may rank as one of the happiest events in our history."<sup>5</sup> Three months later, in a letter to his wife, Buchan describes the Somme as "a mad romantic place."<sup>6</sup>

It is not surprising that Buchan failed to mention that Britain had suffered 60,000 casualties on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, and that he would report the day's

events in romantic, idealistic language reminiscent of Rupert Brooke. In his pamphlet *The Battle of the Somme - First Phase*, Buchan endeavors to perpetuate the myth of the idealized soldier, purposeful and selfless:

The British moved forward in line after line, dressed as if on parade; not a man wavered or broke ranks; but minute by minute the ordered lines melted away under the deluge of his explosives, shrapnel, rifle and machine gun fire. The splendid troops shed their blood like water for the liberty of the world. The attack failed nowhere. In some parts it was slower than others, where the enemy's defence had been less comprehensively destroyed, but by the afternoon all our tasks had been accomplished. The audacious enterprise had been crowned with unparalleled success. Germans may write on their badges that God is with them, but our lads - they know.<sup>7</sup>

Buchan's falsification of the events of July 1916 on the Western Front would rapidly become suspect as photographs and firsthand written accounts of the carnage made their way back to the home front. Official war photographers were not permitted to photograph the dead because the sole purpose of journalists on the Front was to maintain positive morale, both in the trenches and at home. Checkpoints were often established, and any photograph deemed "too graphic" or "morally unsuitable" was destroyed. Neither enlisted men nor officers were allowed to use or even have in possession a camera, as evidenced by General Routine Order No. 1137, which stated: "No Officer or soldier (or other person subject to Military law) is permitted to be in possession of a camera." However, some ignored the War Propaganda Office's proclamation and smuggled small cameras into the trenches, most notably the "Vest Pocket Kodak," a folding version of the popular Brownie camera that was introduced into European markets in 1910. Of the more than five million photographs in the Imperial War Museum in



London, only a handful show the rows and rows of British casualties on the Somme fields. Those precious few surviving photographs exist because of those who, like T. A. Innes and Ivor Castle, dared to record for posterity the extent of casualties on the Somme.

While the War Propaganda Office was successful in censoring journalists' photographs and soldiers' letters home, it was powerless to suppress the firsthand accounts of women living within the war zone whose revelations of life under martial law debunked the myth "of war in terms of heroic pageantry."<sup>8</sup>

War is a phenomenon incomprehensible in its toll on human life, and ritualized by strategies designed by the old to be executed by the young. William Cowper suggests that the ritual of war is "a game, which, were their subjects wise, Kings would not play at."<sup>9</sup> In seeking to rationalize or "provide some kind of explanation" for the game of war, the role of the propagandist is to create an idealized or noble vision of armed conflict as the royal forces of honor and purity setting out to conquer the "evil doers" whose cause is not sanctioned by God. The common soldier thus becomes a "divinized" hero, or fallen god, who in giving his life for the salvation of the just and honorable society becomes a Christ-like image. Prior to July 1, 1916, the construct held and propagandists, such as John Buchan, perpetuated the myth that in the trenches on the Western Front and on the battlefield there abided

the most vivid impression of quiet cheerfulness. There were no shirkers and few who wished themselves elsewhere. One man's imagination might be more active than another's, but the will to fight, and to fight desperately, was universal. With the happy gift of the British soldier they had turned the ghastly business of war into something homely and familiar. Accordingly they took everything as part of the day's work, and waited the supreme moment without heroics and without tremor, confident

in themselves, confident in their guns, and confident in the triumph of their cause. There was no savage lust of battle, but that far more formidable thing - a resolution that needed no rhetoric to support it. Norfolk's words were true of every man of them:

As gentle and as jocund as to jest  
Go I to fight. Truth hath a quiet breast.<sup>10</sup>

Buchan's myth construction is ultimately transgression. The British soldier found war on the Somme neither homely nor familiar. If there existed any "formidable thing - a resolution that needed no rhetoric to support it," it was the overwhelming conviction in each man's heart that his mission on July 1, 1916 was to die.

We were soon obliged to fall flat in the grass to escape the hail of machine-gun fire. As we lay there, a comrade beside me raised his head a little and asked me in which direction were the enemy lines. Those were the last words he uttered. There was a sound like a plop, he gave a shudder and lay still. The bullet had passed through his eye. It was about this time that my feeling of confidence was replaced by an acceptance of the fact that I had been sent here to die. (Pvt. J. G. Crossley, 15<sup>th</sup> Durham Light Infantry).<sup>11</sup>

The propagandist, in perpetuating the pre-first-day-of-the-Somme myth of the Great War as a cause worthy of any sacrifice, no matter how great, ennobling and possessing an "inherent goodness [of] magnificent merit,"<sup>12</sup> must be an active and adept transgressor in order to not only promote, but keep viable, the ritualized myth of war as a noble, sanctified endeavor that transforms the common soldier into a legendary hero. But, as John Kucich points out in his study of transgression in the novels of the Victorian writer Elizabeth Gaskell, "lying - along with conceptual relatives like concealment, deception, secrecy, and ultimately, simply reserve - is the normal province of feminine vice and a sign of abnormality in men."<sup>13</sup> Thus, when the discourse of propaganda seeks

to formulate public opinion and perception through a mythology of divinized heroes who view war only as ennobling and fulfilling, the male propagandist, as mythmaker, becomes abnormally feminized through such transgressive rhetoric. If lying and concealment are feminine in nature, then the male discourse of war propagandists, such as John Buchan, becomes suspect when any male domain, and most especially that of war and soldiers, is feminized. Lying creates an upheaval or inversion of real or imagined constructions of identity, conduct and ritual, and thus the revelation of lies--the revelation of the feminine--jars, and eventually debunks, our myths. As Alasdair MacIntyre has pointed out, transgression is only possible in a society where its members expect the truth to be told.<sup>14</sup> Thus, transgressive propaganda becomes viable in a democratic society that relies upon paternalistic language. As established earlier in Chapter Two, paternalistic language--the language of the fathers--is based in ritualistic, mythological discourse and thus, when paternalistic language is transgressive, truth or that debunking of ritualized myth becomes possible only through a language that reorders the previously accepted concepts of class, role, and function. In effect, if not in intent, transgressive propaganda inverts social and political hierarchies, and thus a language once effective becomes ineffective. The paternalistic language becomes maternalistic in scope and intent.

The last three decades have seen a proliferation of books that have attempted to scrutinize many of the social, political and ideological myths of the First World War. Perhaps one of the most influential has been Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*. In devoting over three hundred pages to "places and situations where literary tradition and real life notably transect,"<sup>15</sup> Fussell expresses a modicum of wonder and

surprise that myth, “a world of ‘secrets,’ conversions, metamorphoses, and rebirths could take shape in the mist of a war representing a triumph of modern industrialism, materialism and mechanism.”<sup>16</sup>

Fussell’s feigned amazement is not any great wonder when one considers that in his treatment of the space where time, memory and history intersect, he wholly fails to acknowledge where political and gender-specific ideologies affect war literature. Whereas Fussell assumes that mythological construct arising out of contemporary European events will be equally and uniformly shared by American writers, one must point out, as has Stanley Cooperman, that war literature arises out of the propaganda from which and to which it relates.<sup>17</sup> In his overall assertion that war always creates a backward vision and a canon of literature that expresses the individual’s “passage from prewar freedom to wartime bondage, frustration and absurdity,”<sup>18</sup> and by his lack of any in-depth discussion of female-penned World War I literature, Fussell perpetuates the timeless myth that war is men’s work and a domain where the feminine and the domestic have no place. Thus, in attempting to demystify war literature by determining “where literary tradition and real life transect,” Fussell cannot succeed when one considers he turns a blind eye to the literary canon of female writers of war literature who represent the real life traditions of hundreds of thousands of female participants in the Great War experience. It is only when one acknowledges and investigates the linkage between maternalistic language, and the manner in which revelation of transgression in propagandized myth creates a social and natural upheaval of established order, that one finds Fussell’s assertion that memory of the past is a male one to be yet another myth of

the Great War. Within the tradition of feminine memoir writing, and specifically the works of Mary Borden, the true locus of “where literary tradition and real life notably transect” to demystify a world of secrets and conversions can be conclusively found.

Mary Borden was born in Chicago, Illinois on May 15, 1868, the only daughter of the wealthy industrialist, William Borden. After experiencing a short-lived and wholly unsatisfying marriage to George Douglas Turner, Borden, at the age of twenty-eight, was living in Scotland in the summer of 1914. Often hostessing grand literary parties frequented by Ford Maddox Ford and Wyndham Lewis, who described her as “an attractive American who stood out from bogus society by her classless freshness,”<sup>19</sup> Borden might seem to draw to mind an American socialite, à la Edith Wharton, adrift in a world of superficiality. But such was not the case.

When war broke out in 1914, Borden left her two children in England and journeyed to Dunkirk to nurse typhoid patients in a former casino that would later be the setting for her short story “The Beach.”

After the initial assault on Verdun, Borden requested permission from General Joffre to establish a surgical hospital unit at the front, to be staffed by British and American nurses, and French surgeons and orderlies. Her personal wealth would underwrite the costs of establishing and maintaining the hundred-bed facility. Although Borden herself was not a nurse (she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in liberal arts from Vassar College in 1907), she quickly became adept in administering injections, changing bandages, assisting in surgeries, and perhaps more onerously, deciding which of the wounded would receive attention and which were beyond hope of survival. In her short

story “Blind,” Borden speaks not only of her role in the field hospital, but of the manner in which she too becomes a combatant:

It was my business to sort out the wounded as were brought in from the ambulances and to keep them from dying before they got to the operating rooms: it was my business to sort out the nearly dying from the dying. I was there to sort them out and tell how fast life was ebbing from them. Life was leaking away from all of them; but with some there was no hurry, with others it was a case of minutes. It was my business to create a counter-wave of life, to create the flow against the ebb. It was like a tug of war with the tide. The ebb of life was cold. When life was ebbing the man was cold; when it began to flow back, he grew warm. It was all, you see, like a dream I thought, “This is the second battlefield. The battle now is going on over the helpless bodies of these men. It is we who are doing the fighting now, with their real enemies.”<sup>20</sup>

Borden casts her experience as one imbued with the godlike power of delineator between life and death within a natural world where nature becomes adversarial. This revisionist view of nature as the enemy creates an inversion of the Romantic tradition of nature as that in which tranquility and peaceful recollection are located. War, and the toll it exacts, becomes the ally, and the elements of nature as adversary, “the other.” Although one may concur partly with Paul Fussell in his contention that the war and the experience of the trenches belonged to a world full of “secrets, conversions, metamorphoses, and rebirths, a world of reinvigorated myth,” the myth of war as romantic quest explodes with the revelation of a propaganda transgressive in design and delivery in Mary Borden’s *The Forbidden Zone*. In exposing how transgressive propaganda inverts previously established and accepted social and cultural beliefs, Borden utilizes the trope of nature as the most romantic of ritualized myths to debunk what Wilfred Owen would decry as “the old Lie: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.”

In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar assert that nineteenth-century writers became proficient in presenting romance and fantasy within an essentially realistic narrative sphere. In her examination of the manner in which twentieth-century women have expanded upon the groundwork laid by these earlier writers, Rachel Blau DuPlessis outlines the ways in which women “write beyond the ending,” creating new social formations and new social groupings and formations. Abundant scholarship from the past thirty years speaks to the manner in which World War I created new social formations amongst nurses, munitions workers, ambulance drivers, relief work volunteers and specialized groups such as the Hello Girls, but the manner in which women at the front exposed the ritualized myth of romantically charged and transgressive propaganda remains a forbidden zone of examination. Borden, like earlier women writers, used the romantic concept of nature imbedded within a realistic narrative sphere, but inverted its customary daydream or fairy tale quality to mirror the manner in which transgressive propaganda, and particularly that associated with the myth of the Christ-like beautiful soldier gallantly marching forth across the Somme battlefield to combat evil, subverts and ultimately inverts all social and ritualistic order.

Borden titled her collection of seventeen “fragments of a great confusion” and five poems *The Forbidden Zone* because “the strip of land immediately behind the zone of fire where [she] was stationed went by that name in the French Army.”<sup>21</sup> The hospital unit she founded was often moved within it from Flanders to the Somme, then to Champagne and back again to Belgium. The title, as Clare M. Tylee points out, “comes to stand for not simply a stretch of land but an emotional space as significant as No-Man’s Land; it was an

area where common human feeling was banned where the agony was too great to respond to as an ordinary woman without breaking down.”<sup>22</sup>

The concept of space and bodies inhabiting space, permeates Borden’s sketches. In attempting to humanize that profane and forbidden space occupied by war and the manner in which it converts the human body into so many parts, dislocated from a recognizable whole, Borden creates a thoroughly modernist prose and poetry that strips away the conceptualized idea of self by revealing, through multiple points of view, a keen and troubling mistrust of all previously constructed senses of reality. Borden’s “forbidden zone” is that space or gap where the romanticized vision of war is transformed into a graphic reality rather than the fictive sphere of poets and Wellington House propagandists. The prior vision of the soldier as a divinized hero, now made tragically human through a new vocabulary of stripped-down, economical language, is swallowed up and consumed in the vision of men who bear no resemblance to past constructions of what is real. Borden questions, in sketch after sketch, what kind of beast war creates. “They did not look quite like men. One could not be certain what kind of men they were. Why, if they are men, don’t they walk? Why don’t they talk? Why don’t they protest? The lie perfectly still.”<sup>23</sup> Whereas Fussell belabors his discussion of a tension existing between abstractions like heroism and glory and the realities of trench warfare, Borden removes the tension from this locus of the war zone and seats it firmly within a forbidden zone inhabited by civilians viewing firsthand the fruits of war. One readily sees that recognition or awareness of this tension does not result in disillusionment for the soldier,



as Hemingway would declare in *A Farewell to Arms*, but rather disillusionment for the civilian.

The civilian's disillusionment with war constitutes the very essence of third-stage propaganda when the rhetoric of war inverts all prior belief systems as the gap between what Allyson Booth refers to as "the generation that engineered the war and the one that was swallowed up in its casualty lists"<sup>24</sup> widens because of an evolving home front distrust of pro-war rhetoric. Borden's forbidden zone represents this space because it is that sphere where the elusiveness of factuality in a war that thrived on rumor and myth comes into sharp focus through the act of upending all previously held constructs of socially and physically ordered truths. In that forbidden zone, soldiers are no longer golden deities who fight the bestial enemy to protect the women at home, but rather they are some other entity, now fashioned merely of "heads and knees and mangled testicles, chests with holes as big as your fist, and pulpy thighs, shapeless . . . Parts of faces - the nose gone, or the jaw."<sup>25</sup> The space of upheaval, reversal, inversion, not only reconstructs reality, but also the physical body. War is no longer fought to protect women, but here, on what Borden calls "the second battlefield," women fight to preserve what remains of man. The enemy is no longer a single entity, a Teutonic marauding beast, but rather the natural world in all its romanticized pantheism.

The British and American Romantic pantheistic tradition not only deified, but also humanized, nature. In William Wordsworth's pastoral poem "Michael," the fields of hay and languid sheep are a sanctuary where one labors with a light heart. For Walt Whitman, leaves of grass blanket the fallen, heroic soldier whose "landscapes projected masculine,

full-sized and golden.”<sup>26</sup> But the new landscape, fashioned by a stasis of monotony and depersonalization, realigning its focus from military to social constructions, unfolds in Borden’s sketch “Moonlight” as what Con Coroneos has described, in discussing Katherine Mansfield’s war stories, as the “disjunction between toxic romance and sober reality.”<sup>27</sup> With Borden, nature, that most romantic of states, is a toxin to recollection. Memory itself, of all that constitutes the past, becomes the bestial other, and must be eradicated.

As the sketch opens, a silver pool of moonlight illuminates the interior of the narrator’s cubicle in the front-line hospital. It reflects in the slop pail and illuminates clothes hanging on pegs, white aprons, rubber boots, a typewriter, a tin of biscuits, “all those familiar things touched with magic [that] make me uneasy.”<sup>28</sup> The narrator confesses that even though her boots are caked with wet mud and her apron splattered with blood, she is not uncomfortable with these reminders of war. It is the scent of new-mown hay that makes her uneasy. It is the presence or recollection of the domestic and natural landscape that is the alien other to be feared.

In order for the nurse to survive in this bordered space, which is what Elaine Scarry calls “an ‘invented structure’ . . . unconsciously entered into as though it were a naturally occurring ‘given’ of the world,”<sup>29</sup> she must reconstruct all prior cultural and emotional landscapes into a present world where all former comforts and romanticisms cannot be endured. All memory, all language of normal life, just cease, for it has no basis in fact. Memory is transgressive in this new world of war:

The war is the world, and this cardboard house, eight by nine,  
behind the trenches, with a roof that leaks, and windows that

rattle, and an iron stove in the corner, is my home in it. I have lived here ever since I can remember. It had no beginning, it will have no end. War, the Alpha, and the Omega, world without end.”<sup>30</sup>

Here Borden lives with surgeons and patients, routinely drinks cocoa while standing around a table in an operating room where legs and arms wrapped in cloths have to be pushed out of the way, and awaits “a harvest [of] crops of men cut down in the fields of France where they were growing. Mown down with a scythe. Gathered into bundles, tossed about with pitchforks.”<sup>31</sup> Within the new domestic landscape of war, men are the fodder grown to feed the insatiable beast of war. But it is not only the soldier who is dehumanized, but also woman who, as nurturer and harbinger of the domestic from which she has emerged,

is no longer a woman. She is dead already, just as I am - really dead, past resurrection. Her heart is dead. She killed it. She couldn't bear to feel it jumping in her side when Life, the sick animal, choked and rattled in her arms. She is blind so that she cannot see the torn parts of men she must handle. Blind, deaf, dead - she is strong, efficient, fit to consort with gods and demons - a machine inhabited by the ghost of a woman - soulless, past redeeming, just as I am - just as I will be.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, war on the front lines, in that bordered space whose secrets Wellington House propagandists would not reveal, dehumanizes its participants and renders them automatons who no longer possess reason and intent. For Borden, war subverts the angelic and produces the bestial.

In his study of diabolism and angelism, Jean-Jacques Lecercle defines angelism as a “theory of intentional meaning. Intention precedes, in whatever sense, utterance. There is a relationship between meaning and saying, intentional meaning and speech-act,

intention and action.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, angelism for Lecercle, is concerned with modes of communication, either verbal or textual, preceded by intention and followed by action. Angelism, like first- and second-stage propaganda, becomes, therefore, a product of the intellect, reason and deliberation, rooted in paternalistic language. Diabolism, or bestiality, the converse of angelism, may therefore be defined as a theory of unintentional or instinctual meaning. Whereas the former aligns itself with conscious modes of verbal expression, the latter resides within the purely instinctual, non-rational or non-reasoning, purely reactionary modes of an animalistic sphere of being devoid of words. To speak intentionally and with reasoned thought is to be angelic; to be silent or react naturally or instinctually is diabolic.

Imprinted past patterns of experience, expectation and response--the diabolic or bestial--condition humans to respond to and act in predictable patterns. When those patterns, modes of expression, or instinctual responses are subverted by violence, we become uncomfortable when the bestial nature is present.

Language and the act of denotation are what differentiate humankind from the balance of nature, that entity from which Borden seeks distance. Only human beings, fully humanized, possess a language based upon symbols and an inherent, intentional meaning for that symbol. In *The Message in the Bottle*, Walker Percy offers a salient explanation of the difference between symbol and sign, angelism and diabolism:

A sign is something that directs our attention to something else. The behavior of a man or animal responding to a natural sign (thunder) or an artificial sign (Pavlov's buzzer) can be explained readily as a series of space-time events which takes place because of changes in the brain brought about by past association.

But what is a symbol? A symbol does not direct at all. It “means” something else. The word *ball* is a sign to my dog and a symbol to you. If I say *ball* to my dog, he will respond like a good Pavlovian organism. But if I say *ball* to you, you will simply look at me and, if you are patient, finally say, “What about it?”<sup>34</sup>

Percy’s sign, that which elicits an involuntary or associational response, requires no conscious nor reasoned response to the stimulus. Diabolic or bestial in nature, a sign is reactionary, triggered by past patterns of response. A symbol, therefore, is angelic, for it requires a degree of internalization brought about by intentional meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure, like Percy, views a symbol as that which

is never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified. The symbol of justice, a pair of scales, could not be replaced by just any other symbol, such as chariot. The word *arbitrary* also calls for comment. The term should not imply that the choice of the signifier is left entirely to the speaker. I mean that it is unmotivated, i.e. arbitrary in that it actually has no natural connections with the signified.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, instinctual behavior, the sign, or that which is reactionary, automatic, often unspoken due to its association to past conditioned events, is the hallmark of diabolism. Borden’s dehumanization of the soldier becomes the tangible marker or signifier of how transgressive rhetoric, transgressive in its relationship between what it seeks to signify and what it symbolizes, reduces the angelic symbol to the bestial sign.

Ross Labrie contends that Lancelot Andrewes Lamar, the shining king of revenge in Walker Percy’s fourth novel, *Lancelot*, is a “victim of the angelism/bestiality syndrome.”<sup>36</sup> Labrie’s use of the word “victim” suggests Lance’s posture is one of

submission or unintentional, even instinctual, existence, what Lecerle and Percy himself regard as the bestial sign.

If one concurs with the foregoing critics and theorists, the very nature of being a victim, and particularly one subsequently motivated by revenge against the aggressor, reduces the individual from operating within the realm of the angelic into the depths of the bestial. Thus, transgressive propaganda, and in particular that which was promoted by John Buchan in response to the holocaust of July 1, 1916, throws both those who have been “victimized” by the Teutonic beast, as well as those who seek revenge against that beast, into the sphere of the bestial. One cannot help but draw an analogy to the angelic/bestial signs and symbols inherent in penal institutions. Those who are contained behind the razor wire, cordoning off the prison from “civilized” society, would appear to bear the sign of the bestial, and our associational response to that sign is triggered by our past imprinted pattern that those incarcerated, having been found guilty by the machinations of justice, require removal from our presence. So, too, is there the myth that “bad boy” criminals are somehow more primal, instinctual, and “animalistic” than polite gentlemen.

Yet, the “victim,” the individual against whom the incarcerated has acted, has experienced a submissive or unintentional existence and, coupled with becoming necessarily an integral part of the judicial process of revenge, emerges as the bestial as well. Thus, perpetrator and victim become one and the same, and the razor wire that circumnavigates the battlefield of war or the prison yard becomes the tangible symbol that participation in war or criminal justice results in rendering the angelic bestial. Borden’s

need in “Moonlight” to dehumanize herself and those whom she ministers to, while simultaneously endeavoring to create a domestic environment within the forbidden zone of the razor wire, is a need for the bestial sign and angelic symbol to find a point of convergence. In finding that space, that locus, where the bestial and angelic intersect, Borden pinpoints where myth and reality transect--a space Fussell cannot find. Propaganda, the bestial mythical sign, the razor wire of war and prison, seeks not so much to contain those within its hold, but to prevent the success of those who endeavor to tear down its fences--with the power, not of lies, but of the stark reality that comes from exploding myth.

Second-stage propaganda, designed to prompt the individual to volunteer because of an intellectual or emotional response to the perceived threat of an invasive other, ceases when the individual moves from the seemingly passive bestial need for appearances to remain as past experiences have dictated that they should be, to an active angelic mode of deliberate and reasoned discourse. This seemingly conflicting dichotomy of oppositional forces vying for supremacy within the individual reflects the Kirkegaardian philosophy to which Walker Percy and Mary Borden were attracted, specifically that all those who traverse the forbidden zone of war must live and die in that world, and thus each individual must confront his own temporality and divided nature. Knowledge is based in the bestial patterns of learned response and instinctual reaction, or it may be a product of reasoned deduction, but knowledge and faith, that convince the mind to believe what the intellect decries as absurd, are often simultaneously present, albeit distinct, as Kirkegaard suggests:

Faith is not a form of knowledge; for all knowledge is either knowledge of the eternal, excluding the temporal and the historical as indifferent, or it is pure historical knowledge. No knowledge can have for its object the absurdity that the eternal is the historical.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, historical knowledge is angelic in its eternal aspect based upon intellectual and reasoned eventualities or it is bestial in its conditioned response to historical experience. Faith, or the spiritual dimension, stands outside of the oppositional dichotomy. This simultaneous presence of eternal, absolute or angelic knowledge and of the bestial nature of historical knowledge dwells within the soldier as he quests in search of some sort of faith, whether that faith be in propaganda or not. Those who lived and died within the forbidden zone of the Somme in July 1916 clung to “the old lie” that the aim of the war was to establish a rational order of a new world based on an ethical code of honor and justice where this war would be the final conflict, the war to end all wars. But such propaganda fails to account for the mystery and contradiction within itself. How can the essence of war--demonic violence coupled with religiously patriotic impulse, “rational” ethic welded to irrational behavior--be understood? Only when this coupling of religious impulse and violence, the rational and the irrational, is resolved within the space where the two spheres meet can the true nature of war be understood. Borden finds that space, that intersection, by revealing how war relies upon the very bestial nature of unconsciousness or anonymity coupled with the angelic need to create a sense of meaning and rationality.

The desire to create meaning or rationalize the irrational, the incomprehensible, lies at the heart of two of Borden’s most poignant, but generally overlooked, sketches. In



“The City in the Desert,” Borden finds that hidden space where our historical bestial knowledge of soldiers as heroes comes into sharp conflict with the unequivocal realization that, in this war, men are but commodities to be bought and sold in a real-life game of Monopoly. Lost in a city where there are no trees, no children, no gardens, but only muddy ground upon which row after row of “gaunt wooden sheds with iron roofs” are precariously placed, the solitary woman wonders if perhaps some new flood, since Noah, has visited the world while she slept. And if God has again unleashed His wrath against the form of man, as we have known him, then

perhaps a new race of men has been hatched out of the mud, hatched like newts, slugs, and larvae of water beetles. But slugs who know horribly, acutely, that they have only a moment to live in between flood tides and so built this place quickly, a silly shelter against the wrath of God, and gave it a magic hieroglyphic name, and put the name on a banner and hoisted a flag, and then put those red crosses up there, tipped skyward. Everything showy in the place points skyward, is designed to catch an eye in the sky, a great angry eye.<sup>38</sup>

Not only is there an overwhelming sense of being lost in an unfamiliar landscape, but also there is the absence of a world in which knowledge or certainty is gained, as secrecy and the unknown become overwhelming. Modris Eksteins avers that “as the purpose of the war became more abstract, [it became] less amenable to conventional imagery.”<sup>39</sup> The unknown city unfolds before the narrator as “a secret place, bare but secret,” engaged in some “dreadful trade.” Even its inhabitants are shrouded in intrigue “with their secretive bundles; they may be smugglers; certainly some shameful merchandise is being smuggled in here. Then they go out under cover of the night to hunt in the backwash.”<sup>40</sup>

All this subterfuge not only excludes the observer from reaching any involuntary or associational response, but also defies any form of internalization. The covert activity of war, producing neither angelic nor bestial response in the observer, creates a total fragmentation and incomprehension. It is only when the woman is told by the unknown other that “these bundles are the citizens of the town,” who “lie perfectly still while they are carried back and forth, up and down, where there’s a face and there’s an arm hanging down crooked,”<sup>41</sup> can she begin to resolve the mystery of how religious impulse and violence, the rational and the irrational, be resolved.

Like Walker Percy’s Lancelot, who cannot hope to attain a sense of grace which is the precursor of faith, until he resolves the manner in which he views all life as either angelic or demonic, pure or evil, Borden’s narrator comes to the realization that her search is not only to find the old society, but also to negotiate her way in a new space created by the transforming evil that plays out before her. Watching “the old men” who load and unload the wounded, she calls to the unknown other, “Come away, come away from the window. I know now. There is no need to sneak up and stare at them. They are lost men, wrecked men, survivors from that other world that was there before the flood passed this way, washed up against the shore of this world again by the great backwash.”<sup>42</sup> Whereas Percy’s Lancelot searches for the “unholy grail,” or the existence of evil, Borden’s narrator has located evil and now searches for the world, not before the fall, but before the flood.

Borden, unlike Lancelot, accepts that in man the angelic and bestial must live together. The world she has come from is the one where the ungodly line of Cain and

godly line of Seth coexisted. She yearns for that space, now forever gone, when “the angry Eye of God” did not dominate her landscape. This trope of a vengeful, angry God whose eye burns down upon His errant flock is one that permeates the 1920s literature which responded to the belief that the 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic was God’s revenge, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, and the 1980’s AIDS poetry responding to the misguided belief that the AIDS virus was God’s revenge against homosexuality.

The quest in “The City in the Desert” to understand or comprehend how war transforms and dehumanizes and subsequently transforms men into uncouth, disheveled, dirty soldiers who understand “how boring it is to be a hero,”<sup>43</sup> continues in Borden’s sketch “Conspiracy.” The “shameful merchandise” is now identified. “The stretchers slide out of the mouths of ambulances with the men on them. The men cannot move. They are carried into a shed, unclean bundles, very heavy, covered with brown blankets,”<sup>44</sup> blankets of mud.

William Breuer points out

Like the Doughboys (as the American soldiers were called), the Army nurses had two implacable enemies--mud and water--in every season except summer. Nurses, along with doctors, in tented field hospitals often had to work in ankle-deep mud. Sometimes the mud was so thick each small step became an effort.”<sup>45</sup>

Images of war and mud, and the manner in which they transform men into a state of inanimate otherness, permeate all of Borden’s sketches, but most particularly “Conspiracy.” Responding to “the military mind practiced in reducing facts to simple numerical statements,”<sup>46</sup> and particularly to the Inspector-General’s calculation that she

“must expect a thirty percent mortality rate,”<sup>47</sup> Borden endeavors to explain not only how soldiers are but interchangeable parts in the machinery of war, but also through specific domestic language, how mud and water transform them into the inanimate. And in this transformation and upheaval, Borden reverses sexual roles and previously held positions of power.

Male bodies in war are reduced to items of domestic commerce in “carefully arranged” mechanized efficiency:

It is arranged that men should be broken and that they should be mended. Just as you send your clothes to the laundry and mend them when they come back, so we send our men to the trenches and mend them when they come back again. You send your socks and your shirts again and again to the laundry, and you sew up the tears and clip the raveled edges again and again just as many times as they will stand it. And then you throw them away. And we send our men to war again and again, just as long as they will stand it; just until they are dead, and then we throw them into the ground.<sup>48</sup>

Borden’s “we” is female, those mothers, wives and lovers who, as graphically depicted in E. V. Kealey’s *Women of Britain say* - “Go!” poster (Appendix B), send “our men up along the dusty road where the bushes grow on either side and the green trees. They come back to us, one by one, two by two in ambulances, lying on stretchers.”<sup>49</sup> Man, formed of dust, marches forward into battle to protect and defend woman, but, subjected to the new flood waters that consume the landscape, return, now formed of mud, to woman who shall mend him. Whereas God fashioned man from dust, war fashions him of mud, and the woman/nurse who battles with needles and thread, scissors and scalpels, “conspires against his right to die.”<sup>50</sup>

In her memoir *Eighteen Months in the War Zone*, Kate Finzi indicts all those who have not enlisted or volunteered their services to the war effort. A supporter of the eugenics movement, Finzi describes the British soldier as the “bedrock of Britain,” who is not a shirker, and she rails against those who are “quite content to let others do their jobs whilst they look on with an amused smile and reap the benefit of the shortage of men.”<sup>51</sup> Borden responds to this myth of men as bedrock with the depiction of the wounded soldier lying helplessly immobile, obediently submitting to woman.

We conspire against his right to die. We experiment with his bones, his muscles, his sinews, his blood. We dig into the yawning mouths of his wounds. Helpless openings, they let us into the secret places of his body. We plunge deep into his body. We make discoveries within his body. He lays himself out. He bares himself to our knives. His mind is annihilated. He pours out his blood, unconscious. His red blood is spilled and pours over the table on the floor while he sleeps.<sup>52</sup>

Although Paul Fussell has opined that “the language of military attack--*assault, impact, thrust, penetration*--has always overlapped with sexual importunity”<sup>53</sup> and that “the deprivation and loneliness and alienation characteristic of the soldier’s experience [implies] a sublimated (i.e. ‘chaste’) form of temporary homosexuality,”<sup>54</sup> Borden’s bitter and graphic language subverts this myth as well as that of the unleashed wild Hun raping women and stabbing the bodies of children. It is the soldier who, like the virgin whose blood spills in the first engagement, is violated and penetrated while lying helplessly unconscious. This obvious sexual role reversal underscores the manner in which war inverts all previously held social, political and sexual ideologies and feminizes the male.

Moreover, the soldier is not only feminized, but also reduced to the status of helpless infant. Whereas in “Moonlight” the wounded soldier has been reduced to the

inanimate and vegetative, in “Conspiracy,” he is the child, who “while he is still asleep, we carry him into another place and put him to bed. He awakens bewildered as children do, expect, perhaps to find himself at home with his mother leaning over him. He is helpless, so we do for him what he cannot do for himself, and he is grateful. He is obedient.”<sup>55</sup> Thus, war not only inverts hierarchical orders sexually, but temporally. The soldier, as willing or unwilling participant in the transgressive propaganda machine, is simultaneously feminized and infanticized.

The myth of the golden youth, exposing himself gallantly as he goes over the top, is incongruous with that of Borden’s representations of soldiers as crops, loaves of bread, disjointed “heads and knees and mangled testicles.” In the most anthologized of the sketches, “The Beach,” Borden looks at the deeper incongruity of the mythologized long-suffering lovely woman welcoming home the war hero. The setting here is a beach resort where an overwhelming sense of an idealized existence abides. The woman muses to herself that “the beach is perfect, the sun is perfect, the shore is perfect; the face of the beach is smooth as cream and the sea to-day is a smiling infant and the sun is delicious.”<sup>56</sup> Such notions of the idyllic face of a natural landscape are subverted by the impinging presence of the maimed lover in the wheelchair beside her. Venting his anger and bitterness towards the war and its perpetrators on his young wife, he takes perverse pleasure in recounting to her the pain and suffering he has endured and those like him who have “all gone to pieces, parts of ‘em missing, you know, tops of their heads gone, or one of their legs.”<sup>57</sup>

The wounded husband has been receiving treatment at a hospital, converted from a casino. Claire Tylee points out:

Such an incongruous use of a casino was commented on in several war-diaries, for instance Kate Finzi's: 'the Casino's spacious gaming rooms make wonderful cheerful wards.' Even she was not immune to the irony of a concert party's performance in one of these wards:

*"Messieurs, faites vos jeux, le jeu est fait!"* Over and over again the suave voice of the croupier seemed to ring in my ears - as I had so often rung in this very room in pace time. *'Faites vos jeux.'* What an awful thing this new game of War is, only those who have seen can grasp. *'Le jeu est fait!'*--and here in this gilded hall, that once witnessed such a different game, we see the results."<sup>58</sup>

Simultaneously loving and hating her for her compassion and perfection, the damaged soldier finds he is psychologically tied to this reminder of the world to which he can never return. He perceives that the hierarchy of power is now reversed and "he had no power over her any more but the power of infecting her with his corruption. His one luxury now was jealousy of her perfection, and his one delight would be to give in to the temptation to make her suffer. He could only reach her that way. It would be his revenge on the war."<sup>59</sup>

In attempting to reconstruct some sort of identity out of the conflict and fragmentation that exist physically and psychologically, the wounded soldier now attacks the symbol of the home front, the keeper of the fires. He vows that once home, he will send her away, but he knows he is incapable of letting this touchstone to his historical past go. She wonders if she can go on loving him, although she knows she must. The angelic and bestial are now at war as the unspoken association to past conditioned feelings vies

with the internalization of one's intentional actions. In the end, Borden concludes that the effects of war upon all participants, regardless of where the arena might be, render the individual a divided self, or what, in describing the new literary tone of modernism, Jon Glover refers to as that "which constitutes an expansive, sometimes unstable, realism."<sup>60</sup> It is precisely here, in Borden's graphic representation of how both the reality and perception of war was experienced by not only men, but women, that we find the true locus of "where literary tradition and real life notably transect."

On February 3, 1917, after the U. S. warship *Housatonic* was sunk by German submarines, Woodrow Wilson severed diplomatic relations between the United States and Germany. As it became increasingly profitable to supply materials to the Allies, the United States moved closer to a war economy, and, to facilitate such a movement, Wilson created the Council of National Defense, the Civilian Advisory Committee and the Shipping Board. But war production remained pitifully below the scale required for full-preparedness.

While the United States eyed the unfolding war in Europe, diplomatic relations with Mexico rapidly deteriorated, as Mexico erupted in civil war. In 1914, Francisco "Pancho" Villa challenged Venustiano Carranza for leadership of the country. In October 1915, after Wilson recognized Carranza as President of Mexico, Villa began to launch a succession of guerilla raids, including sorties into New Mexico. When seventeen American citizens were killed in Columbus, New Mexico, Wilson dispatched the "Punitive Expedition" in 1916, commanded by General John J. Pershing.



Although the Punitive Expedition failed to apprehend Villa, it did spur Congress to pass the National Defense Act of 1916, designed to strengthen the American military. The Act appropriated funds for the enlargement of the Army and Navy, and the creation of the National Guard.

In an attempt to keep American military concentration centered on Pancho Villa and the Mexican civil war, and therefore out of European matters, German Foreign Minister Alfred Zimmermann sent on January 16, 1917 a coded telegram to the German minister in Mexico authorizing him to propose a German-Mexican alliance to Carranza. If Mexico would declare war on the United States, Germany should support Mexico in its efforts to reclaim lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. However, in responding to Carranza's demands, Wilson had withdrawn American troops on January 25; Carranza was, therefore, reluctant to enter into any conflict with the United States. Unfortunately, for Germany, the Zimmermann telegram was intercepted by British Admiralty intelligence and relayed to President Wilson. On March 1, 1917, Wilson revealed its contents to the American people.<sup>61</sup>

The effect of the Zimmermann telegram made Wilson's stance of neutrality no longer possible. On April 2, 1917, Wilson appeared before Congress and requested a declaration of war against Germany. Stating this war would be "a partnership of democratic nations against a natural foe to liberty," Wilson declared

The world must be made safe for democracy. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when

those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.<sup>62</sup>

Congress met Wilson's war speech with resounding applause and acclaim, but privately he confided to his personal secretary, John P. Tumulty, that his address was "a message of death to our young men."<sup>63</sup>

The effect of military and civilian mutinies in France, Germany, England and Russia provided tangible evidence that the beginnings of third-stage propaganda, characterized by the individual questioning the morality and effectiveness of war, was taking hold in Europe. But in the United States, following the course of propaganda set by Wellington House, Wilson created the Committee for Public Information, naming George Creel to serve as director. In excess of 150,000 American men and women penned patriotic pamphlets designed to muster feverish support for the war effort. One of the most famed American propaganda materials produced by the Creel Committee was the "I Want You" poster by artist James Montgomery Flagg (Appendix C), which depicted Uncle Sam pointing his finger at the viewer--an adaptation of the famous British recruiting poster featuring Lord Kitchener (Appendix A).

But not all Americans would be wanted or recruited for service. Black Americans, such as Alice Dunbar-Nelson, would record the frustration and politics of exclusion in a war their President had declared would be a "fight for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its people." For the 350,000 black Americans who served, liberation by their own government to serve as equals would not be achieved. With the 4,355,000 Yanks who went "over there," Jim Crow marched along.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Siegfried Sassoon, *Collected Poems* (New York: Viking Press, 1949), p.58.
- <sup>2</sup> John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p.235.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.
- <sup>4</sup> John Masefield, *The Old Front Line* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), p.29.
- <sup>5</sup> John Buchan, *The Future of War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), p.13.
- <sup>6</sup> Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words* (London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1989), p. 94.
- <sup>7</sup> Buchan, p. 42.
- <sup>8</sup> Philip Gibbs, *Realities of War* (London: Heinemann, 1920), p. 4.
- <sup>9</sup> William Cowper, *The Task, Book V., The Winter Morning Walk* (Menston: Scolar Press, 1973), p. 38.
- <sup>10</sup> John Buchan, *The Battle of the Somme* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917), p. 35.
- <sup>11</sup> Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 114-15.
- <sup>12</sup> Sir Gilbert Parker, *Is England Apathetic? A Reply* (London: Darling, 1915), p. 11.
- <sup>13</sup> John Kucich, *The Power of Lies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 128.
- <sup>14</sup> Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 77.
- <sup>15</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. ix.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- <sup>17</sup> Stanley Cooperman, *World War I and the American Novel* (London: John Hopkins, 1967), p. 58.

<sup>18</sup> Fussell, p. 312.

<sup>19</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardier* (London: Eyre & Spottswood, 1937), p. 60.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Borden, *The Forbidden Zone* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc, 1929), pp. 151-52, 155.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iv.

<sup>22</sup> Claire M. Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990), p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> Borden, p. 120.

<sup>24</sup> Allyson Booth, *Postcards from the Trenches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Borden, p. 120.

<sup>26</sup> Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> Con Coroneos, "Flies and Violets in Katherine Mansfield," *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, Suzanne Raitt and Trudi Tate, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 209.

<sup>28</sup> Borden, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 128.

<sup>30</sup> Borden, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>33</sup> Jean-JacquesLecercle, "Diabolism and Angelism, Dialogue, meaning and nonsense." *English Studies in Transition: Papers from the ESSE Inaugural Conference*, Robert Clark and Piero Boitani, eds. (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> Walker Percy, *The Message in the Bottle* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1995), p.153.

<sup>35</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, "Nature of the Linguistic Sign," *Course in General Linguistics*, 1923 (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 74.

<sup>36</sup> Ross Labrie, *The Catholic Imagination in American Literature* (Columbia, (MO)): University of Missouri Press, 1997), p.141.

<sup>37</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Doubleday, 1954), p.158.

<sup>38</sup> Borden, pp. 118-19.

<sup>39</sup> Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London: Black Swan, 1990), p. 287.

<sup>40</sup> Borden, p. 93.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 125-26.

<sup>45</sup> William B. Breuer, *War and American Women: Heroism, Deeds, and Controversy* (Westport (CT): Praeger Publishers, 1997), p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Tylee, p. 98.

<sup>47</sup> Borden, p. 156.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>51</sup> Kate Finzi, *Eighteen Months in the War Zone* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd. 1916), p. 93.

<sup>52</sup> Borden, p. 127.

<sup>53</sup> Fussell, p. 270.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>55</sup> Borden, pp. 127-128.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>58</sup> Tylee, p. 99.

<sup>59</sup> Borden, pp. 51-52.

<sup>60</sup> Jon Glover and John Silkin, eds. *The Penguin Book of First World War Prose* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> The Zimmermann Telegram read: "We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the [Mexican] President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the [Mexican] President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace. Signed, ZIMMERMANN."

<sup>62</sup> S. L. A. Marshall, *World War I* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 281.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter Five

### Conscription, Patriotism, and the Propaganda of Racial Exclusion

These truly are the Free,  
These souls that grandly rise  
Above base dreams of vengeance for their wrongs,  
Who march to war with visions in their eyes  
Of Peace through Brotherhood, lifting glad songs,  
Aforetime, while they front the firing line.  
Stand and behold! They take the field to-day,  
Shedding their blood like Him now held divine,  
That those who mock might find a better way!  
-----Roscoe C. Jamison  
from *The Negro Soldiers*

When the National Defense Act was passed in June 1916, the United States regular army consisted of 133,000 men, a military force so paltry that General Peyton C. Marsh declared that it was scarcely enough to form a police force for emergencies within the territorial United States. Even before the declaration of war in April 1917, the Wilson Administration, basing its decision on Great Britain's domestic and military experience during the early years of the war, determined that conscription, rather than volunteerism, would be needed in order to fill the ranks.

In 1914, Great Britain was the only warring nation that relied solely on an all-volunteer army. But the staggering losses sustained in the early battles that had so decimated Britain's forces, coupled with the havoc occasioned in the war manufacturing sector as large numbers of men who would have been more useful as munitions workers than foot soldiers enlisted, prompted the British Parliament to pass legislation in early 1916 designed to authorize the country's first modern conscription. This action was instituted to ensure sufficient numbers of qualified men would be available to fill the

military ranks while still maintaining adequate numbers of workers within the necessary war-manufacturing sector. In 1917, American military planners looked to the British experience in debating whether the United States would institute a policy of conscription.

But it was not just the problems encountered by the British volunteer units that prompted the Wilson Administration to advocate the Selective Service Act of 1917. The difficulties and inadequacies of volunteer units experienced during the Civil and Spanish-American Wars were fresh in the minds of many Americans. In both of these wars, influential and wealthy citizens had raised regiments based upon their own popularity, wealth and social standing, often bestowing elevated military rank and field command upon those whose social prominence, rather than military acumen, was of prime consideration. The most memorable example of such methods of recruitment and elevated command was Teddy Roosevelt's cavalry regiment of "Rough Riders," who had garnered massive romantic appeal during the war with Spain in 1898. In 1917, ex-President Roosevelt, a vocal opponent of Wilson, pressured the government to allow him to recruit a new band of Rough Riders for service on the Western Front, citing the efficiency and competency not only of his leadership, but also of the men he selected and the manner in which they performed.

I do not believe that any army in the world offered finer material than was offered by the junior officers and enlisted men of the regular army which disembarked on Cuban soil in June, 1898; and by the end of the next two weeks probably the average individual infantry or cavalry organization therein was at least as good as the average organization of the same size in an Old-World army. But taking the army as a whole and considering its management from the time it began to assemble at Tampa until the surrender of Santiago, I seriously doubt if it was as efficient as a really good European or Japanese army of



half the size. Since then we have made considerable progress. Our little army of occupation that went to Cuba at the time of the revolution in Cuba ten years ago was thoroughly well handled and did at least as well as any foreign force of the same size could have done. But it did not include ten thousand men, that is, it did not include as many men as the smallest military power in Europe would assemble any day for manoeuvres [sic]. Our army should be doubled in size. An effective reserve should be created. Every year there should be field manoeuvres [sic] on a large scale, a hundred thousand being engaged for several weeks. At least one third of the officers in each grade should be promoted on merit without regard to seniority, and the least fit for promotion should be retired. Every unit of the regular army and reserve should be trained to the highest efficiency under war conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Wilson quickly rejected Roosevelt's proposal and informed Congress that the selection of America's armed forces must be conducted with total impersonality and without regard for social or economic standing. However, Wilson's concept of impersonality and democratic selection would prove to mean only if the conscript were a white male.

Whereas during the early months of the war Britain had relied upon a first stage propaganda that would call upon the individual's sense of purpose to volunteer for service, the Wilson Administration was mindful of the widespread feeling of parochialism in the United States, coupled with a prevalent feeling amongst its citizenry of distrust for the federal government and the military, which is the hallmark of third stage propaganda. Thus, the Selective Service Act of 1917 placed the responsibility for the actual drafting of conscripts with 4,648 local Selective Service Boards, which would be comprised of mainly local business and civic community leaders. Although this structure appeared to mirror the Civil War pattern of influential community fathers recruiting and outfitting

prospective regiments, the civilian board members would have no input as to the role of each conscript in actual military service.

Fresh within the minds of President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of War Newton D. Baker was the manner in which the Union draft law during the Civil War had been fraught with deferments based on class and wealth, and the populace's resistance to government coercion, most notably the bloody New York riots of 1863. In an attempt to stay off any impending widespread refusal to comply with the Act, Wilson declared that this draft "was in no sense a conscription of the unwilling, but a selection from a nation which has volunteered in mass," and established June 5, the day appointed when all men between the ages of 21 and 30 would come forward to register, as "a great day of patriotic devotion and obligation."<sup>2</sup> Although virulent opposition abounded, most specifically that expressed by Speaker of the House James Beauchamp Clark, who declared that the Act resulted in "there being precious little difference between a conscript and a convict,"<sup>3</sup> nearly ten million men reported to their local polling places to be registered on June 5. Secretary Baker expressed his relief and amazement that the day passed without violence and that "the registration was really a very remarkable demonstration."<sup>4</sup>

However, the absence of violent protests and the registration of ten million men at local boards did not necessarily mean the practice of "draft dodging" was nonexistent. Various reports indicate that almost three million men successfully managed to avoid registration and were never prosecuted. And of those who registered, approximately 12 percent, or 338,000 young men, failed to report for induction or went AWOL within the first few days of training. Law enforcement officials were called upon to detain men

consistently and randomly walking the streets of large cities and demand that they produce their draft registration cards. This practice resulted in almost half the deserters being apprehended and returned to the military and several thousand being labeled as “slackers,” a term that has now entered our daily language.

By June 6, 1917, nearly ten million young American men had registered for the draft, but none had been actually drafted into service. The U.S. Army reported that it could accept immediately 687,000, chosen by a lottery system. Since the greatest number of men registered by any of the 4,648 boards was 10,500, that many numbered slips of paper were placed in a fish bowl in the Senate Office Building on July 20. A blindfolded Secretary Baker reached in, and drew one slip of paper bearing the number 258. Thus, those men whose draft card bore the number 258 were immediately drafted. In those rural areas where the draft list did not contain 258 names, the man with the highest number was drafted instead. The lottery selection continued throughout the morning until every capsuled slip had been drawn and all numbers had been issued.

It was not until September 5 that the first of the draftees entrained to regional basic training camps. The scenes of debarkation were not unlike those of Britain three years earlier as young men, in civilian clothing, marched to railway stations accompanied by local school bands and wives, sweethearts and parents. Many Civil War veterans marched with them, carrying the tattered remains of Union and Confederate flags. Some draftees were jubilant about the great adventures that lay ahead; others were strangely intuitive that many would not return with as great a degree of fanfare; and still others approached the impending venture drunk on homegrown liquor. Benedict Crowell and Robert Wilson

report how a group of ranchers, Native Americans and miners on a train from Arizona “had one trait in common: they were drunk, and not just drunk, but extravagantly and supremely drunk.”<sup>5</sup> The narrative goes on to report that within twenty-four hours of debarkation, the rowdy group tossed one porter from the train, ransacked a saloon, literally roped and attempted to hog tie a number of local citizens in Trinidad, Colorado during a scheduled stopover and, as amusement, orchestrated sparing matches among a bulldog, a goat and a semi-domesticated wildcat that they had brought with them as pets and mascots.

Any jocularly or feeling of excitement for the great adventure that lay ahead was dashed by the young draftee’s first vision of and experiences in his new home, the training camp. One wrote home:

It is a desolate wilderness of sand and scrub oak and famous for nothing but our great national bird, the mosquito. We were marched off over rough, uncompleted roads, thick with dust, around heaps of building material, over spur tracks of the railroad, past half-constructed barracks, all to the tune of carpenters’ hammers which clattered with machine-gun like precision. Reaching a nearly completed barrack, we were halted, and entering were assigned our bunks. To each man was issued his first army equipment, which consisted of two olive-drab blankets, a bed sack to be filled with straw, and a mess kit. We were then introduced to army “chow” in a manner which became painfully familiar to us. Passing along an ever-tedious mess line to a counter, and armed with our newly acquired eating utensils, which we juggled with a difficulty born of inexperience, we made the acquaintance of army beans and that fluid which some demented people have called coffee. The coffee cup gave us more trouble, perhaps, than anything else, for it seemed to absorb all the heat of its contents. It became so hot that it would have blistered our lips had we attempted to drink from it. When it cooled off a bit we confidently grasped the handle, hoping to wash down a few beans, only to find, too late, that the handle catch was loose, and that the entire contents

was being swiftly dumped into the beans. Falling on another line, we poured what had now become bean soup into a garbage can and completed our first mess by washing our mess kits in soapy hot water and then rinsing them in clear cold water.<sup>6</sup>

As the new recruits flooded into the hastily constructed thirty-two housing and training facilities scattered around the country, veteran Army officers found this new breed of soldier far different from those who had fought in any previous war. The national image of the American rural male as a rugged individualist and born rifleman was soon dispelled. The majority of the new recruits had never handled a firearm, and even those experienced hunters and sons of mountaineers were baffled by Army rifles. Due to the shortage of weapons, many new recruits were not issued a rifle until arriving in France and had only practiced with broom handles and logs. Moreover, Robert H. Zieger points out:

The masses of recruits live up to the prevailing image of the bold and hardy offspring of pioneer stock. Almost a fifth of those inducted, for example were foreign-born. Army officers charged with censoring the mail of American troops in France had to deal with letters written in some forty-nine languages. Nor were the recruits as prepossessing physically and mentally as the national mythology would have it. The typical soldier was just over 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighed about 142 pounds. A staggering 31 percent of all U.S. Army inductees - men who had passed the preliminary screening administered by local draft boards - were found to be illiterate. The reported results of newly designed and administered tests of mental and psychological ability were even more unsettling, for the psychologists who designed and interpreted them reported that fully 47 percent of whites and almost 90 percent of blacks were below the mental age of 13.<sup>7</sup>

Although the methods utilized for registering and drafting eligible males in 1917 were designed to alleviate, if not eliminate, the disparities experienced in the conscription

process during the Civil War, the Selective Service Act of 1917 was not colorblind in its selection of draftees, nor was the mental and psychological testing wholly impartial. Of the nearly 24 million who registered for the draft on June 5 and September 12, approximately 9.63 percent were black males. But of the one million blacks examined and classified for duty on June 5, 51.65 percent were designated as Class I compared to only 32.53 percent of the white males examined. One would surmise that more blacks were taken because of superior mental, psychological and physical testing results. However, such was not the case.

Intelligence testing was a new field in 1917 and the methods used to examine the mental and psychological capacity of selective service registrants were fraught with misapplications and misinterpretations that would be easily recognizable to any student of psychology today. However, psychologists of the day employed by the U.S. Army were quick to make generalizations from the erroneous data compiled, and swiftly determined that the average mental age of the average black draftee was 10.1 years. Given that a moron was defined as an adult whose mental age was between the ages of seven and twelve, opponents to blacks serving on an equal basis in the Army were quick to site these figures as justification for the separation of black from white enlistees in training camps and divisions.<sup>8</sup>

In 1917, Carl O. Ferguson, a psychologist on the faculty of the University of Virginia, was the leading authority in the field of comparative intelligence between blacks and whites. His study of school children in Richmond, Newport News and Fredericksburg had concluded that city children were more literate than their rural counterparts, and that

white children were more literate than black. Given that the majority of black children lived in the rural areas at that time and the quality of education in many rural Virginia communities was painfully substandard, Ferguson's results are not surprising. However, as the United States prepared to amass an army to go to France, Ferguson was approached by the Army to design and administer intelligence tests to all enlistees. Two tests were utilized--the Alpha, an early version of the standardized Stanford-Binet tested those who could read and write, and the Beta, designed to test illiterates. Black recruits from Virginia, West Virginia, the Carolinas, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia, who professed that they could read and write were administered the Alpha test and scored significantly lower than their white peers. No weight was given to whether the draftee had attended a city or rural school, or whether the school was one composed of several grades or the traditional one-room schoolhouse. On the Beta test, the median scores for whites and blacks showed little variation and thus no racial differences in intelligence could be ascertained. Thus, the Beta test was declared invalid and the results were not considered as conclusive. A revised Beta test, similar to the Alpha test, was administered and reflected similar results. The Army accepted the revised Beta tests as conclusive documentation that significant disparities existed between the relative intelligence of white and black draftees.

Ferguson's conclusions were "authenticated" by Carl C. Brigham, a psychologist at Princeton University, who attempted to address the argument that Ferguson had not considered differences in social and economic level, or in opportunity to pursue an education and the quality of that education. Although Brigham acknowledged that

Southern schools were apt to be poorer than Northern schools, and that Ferguson's original data was obtained only from those enlistees who attended Southern schools, he deduced that "it is absurd to attribute all differences between northern and southern Negroes to superior educational opportunities in the North, for differences were found among groups of the same schooling, and differences are shown by Beta as well as by Alpha."<sup>9</sup> However, Brigham failed to point out that the Beta test was revised until it yielded the results that Ferguson desired. Therefore, the Beta test results must be considered inconclusive at best.

Robert M. Yerkes, Colonel in the U.S. Army, concluded that Ferguson's original intelligence tests and Brigham's further study of those results made it abundantly clear that Northern whites were far more literate than Southern whites, Northern blacks were preferable to Southern blacks, and that in many instances Northern blacks were far superior to Southern whites. In 1921, Yerkes included his data in tabular form in his account of psychological examination conducted by the United States Army during the war years as follows:<sup>10</sup>

Table 1. Alpha Test Scores for Southern White and Northern Black Draftees

<i>White</i>		<i>Black</i>	
State	Score	State	Score
Tennessee	44.0	Ohio	45.7
Texas	43.4	Illinois	42.2
Oklahoma	42.9	Indiana	41.5
Kentucky	41.5	New York	38.6
Alabama	41.3	Pennsylvania	34.7
Mississippi	37.6		
Louisiana	36.1		
Arkansas	35.6		



Yerkes' conclusions angered Southern legislators and ultimately had no effect upon the manner in which the U.S. Army regarded all black draftees as intellectually inferior to their white counterparts.

In the South, despite the manner in which local draft boards attempted to classify black enlistees as either mentally or physically unsuitable for duty, statistics for Alabama, Florida, and Virginia reveal that blacks made up more than 30 percent of the total registrants; in South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana, more than 40 percent; and in Mississippi, 50.42 percent. And in Clarke County, Georgia, blacks comprised 45 percent of those males who registered on June 5, yet 58 percent of those pressed into service.<sup>11</sup> One would surmise that local draft boards, particularly in the South, accepted black registrants as freely as whites, but such was not the case. The majority of Southern boards was opposed to having their black farm laborers drafted, and it was not uncommon for boards to accept those who owned their own land while exempting those who worked for whites as sharecroppers or tenant farmers. Moreover, many Southerners encouraged blacks to desert for profit, as the draft laws provided that an apprehended deserter would be fined, generally \$50.00, with the amount fined given to the individual who apprehended the deserter. Some Southern draft officials, working with local postal authorities, would intercept an individual's notification of induction, and then turn him in, and collect the reward.

Perhaps the most serious form of discrimination practiced by local draft boards was the manner in which black physicians were categorized as unacceptable for medical service. Although the Army was in desperate need of physicians, black doctors were

initially refused commissions, only to be later inducted as privates and assigned to stevedore regiments and labor battalions. In response to accusations of blatant discrimination, Assistant Secretary of War Frederick P. Keppell commented, “The chief reason for not taking more black doctors was that the medical profession did not rank the colored medical schools very highly.”<sup>12</sup> Attempting to add even greater rationale for the practice of discrimination toward black physicians, Secretary of War Baker, in a letter to Emmett J. Scott, his Special Assistant, stated:

Some of the complaints or charges of discrimination seem all the more unwarranted in view of the fact that there is far less hazard to the life of the soldier connected with the Service Battalion than is true in the case of the soldier who faces shot and shell on the firing line. Furthermore, the attitude of the War Department toward colored soldiers is clearly shown by the following facts: More than 626 of the 1,260 colored men who completed the course at the Reserve Officers’ Training Camp, at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, have been commissioned as officers in the United States Army, nearly 100 colored physicians and surgeons have received commissions as officers in the Medical Reserve Corps, and a full fighting force of 30,000 colored soldiers, including representatives in practically every branch of military service, will constitute the Ninety-second Division, to be detailed for duty in France under General Pershing. We are bending all our energies to the building up of an Army to defeat the enemy of democracy and freedom, and the Army we are building contains both white and colored men. We are expecting that they will all do their duty, and when they have done it they will be alike entitled to the gratitude of their country.<sup>13</sup>

However, when the 92d Division arrived in France, Pershing decided to assign it to the British army for training, but Britain protested on the grounds that it was not listed on the roster from Washington of those units to train with her army. Ultimately facing problems of prejudice from General Robert Bullard, commanding officer of the American 2d Army

who wrote in his diary, "Poor Negroes! They are hopelessly inferior,"<sup>14</sup> Pershing handed over the black draftees of the 92d Division to France for training.

The men of the 92d division, composed entirely of black draftees, initially enjoyed a greater degree of social freedom in France than they had ever known in the United States. They were allowed to go into the local towns during free time, and socialize with the local citizens, even enjoying an occasional glass of beer or wine, although hard liquor was strictly forbidden. On July 4, 1918, as some of the black draftees of the 92d were celebrating Independence Day with local French citizens, a white officer took it upon himself to instruct the French as to the manner in which black soldiers should be treated. The soldiers were warned that they were to treat French women as they would American white women, which meant no direct conversation and no physical contact. French townspeople were instructed that black Americans were inferior to white Americans, and were not permitted to ride in the same busses and trains as whites or to live in adjacent housing.

Addie Hunton and Kathryn Johnson, two black women who, with the help of the YMCA, were able to go to France to report the experiences of black soldiers, later reported on the propaganda of exclusion black soldiers were subjected to in France at the hands of their white officers.

The story of the roughness of the colored men was being told to the [French] civilians in order that all possible association between them might be avoided. They had been systematically informed that their dark-skinned allies were not only unworthy of any courtesies from their homes, but that they were so brutal and vicious as to be absolutely dangerous. They were even told that they belonged to a semi-human species who only a few years ago had been caught in the American forests, and only

been tamed enough to work under the white Americans' direction. Literature was gotten out through the French Military Mission and sent to French villages explaining how Americans desired the colored officers and troops to be treated; that they desired them to receive no more attention than was required in the performance of the military duties; that to show them social courtesies not only would be dangerous, but that it would be an insult to the American people. The literature was finally collected and ordered destroyed by the French ministry.<sup>15</sup>

White officers, under direct order from General Charles C. Ballou, who feared that any degree of social equality for black soldiers would "cause thousands to be very much set up by this new and agreeable condition [of equality in France],<sup>16</sup> initiated procedures that would assure segregation in mess halls, on railway facilities, and in sleeping quarters. Often black officers were assigned to boxcars while their white counterparts enjoyed first class conditions. As a means of assuring that black American soldiers would not enjoy any semblance of equality while serving with the French army, Colonel Linard of the AEF Headquarters authored "Secret Information Concerning Black American Troops," a document informing French officers how American blacks should be treated and why. The document asserted that although the French might find the state of American prejudice towards blacks to be unfounded, all French people must respect the American policy. The document further stated that the existence of fifteen million Negroes in the United States was a constant threat to racial purity unless blacks and whites were kept strictly apart, and if American Negroes were shown any semblance of equality while in France, all Americans would be outraged and regard the offensive behavior as a direct attack on their national security.<sup>17</sup>

But the French people, preferring to believe what they themselves experienced in their interactions with black soldiers rather than the propaganda of exclusion, provided such a congenial domestic environment that many black American soldiers preferred their situation in France to that which they had known in the United States. Hunton and Johnson reported:

The many ports of France were particularly the home of the colored soldiers so that landing at Bordeaux it did not seem strange to be greeted first of all by our own men. But it did seem strange that we should see them guarding German prisoners! Somehow we felt that colored soldiers found it rather refreshing - even enjoyable for a change - having come from a county where it seemed everybody's business to guard them. The colored soldiers were greatly loved by the French people, and while passing through the town of Laon, which had been in the hands of the Germans for four years, the French civilians knelt by the roadside and kissed the hands of the boys of the 370<sup>th</sup> Infantry, so grateful were they for their deliverance.<sup>18</sup>

Although black soldiers were accepted and treated as equals by the French people, even in light of the Linard "Secret Information" document, American soldiers and American relief agencies remained prejudicial. Among those facilities that practiced the strictest forms of segregation was the YMCA, the agency designated by the American military to provide for the recreational, educational and religious needs of its soldiers. Every YMCA camp was segregated, particularly the sleeping "huts" and canteens. Often no canteen facilities were available for black soldiers who many times were forced to enter white canteens in the hopes of procuring basic needs and, more importantly, stamps for letters to home. Ralph Tyler, one of a handful of black war correspondents in France, reported on the treatment of black soldiers in YMCA facilities.

The only discrimination a Colored man from the states, or any other country, encounters in this land of liberty is at the hands of the Y.M.C.A., and most regretfully, Colored soldiers who have been at the fighting front, who have wounds to prove they have been in battle, and whose Croix de Guerre, decorating their breast was the proof that they had performed some act of valor for their country are the victims of the Y.M.C.A.'s undemocratic discrimination. Too many Y.M.C.A. people over here accord Colored soldiers treatment due a pariah rather than a patriot.<sup>19</sup>

Although white women volunteered in the Y.M.C.A. and Red Cross relief agencies, black women were almost universally denied the chance to serve. In spite of the fact that the Red Cross was in desperate need of nurses, as evidenced by a widespread poster campaign designed to encourage recent nursing graduates to volunteer (Appendix D), and several qualified registered black nurses were available for service, none were accepted. "Press and pulpit, organizations and individuals were beseeching and demanding in 1918 that the Red Cross add some of our well-trained and experienced nurses to their 'overseas' contingent, but no favorable response could be obtained."<sup>20</sup> However, Alice Dunbar-Nelson elaborates on the manner in which some black nurses were accepted into service on the home front, but forced "to pass" to serve in France.

Colored women since the inception of the war had felt keenly their exclusion from overseas service. The need for them was acute; their willingness to go was complete; the only thing that was wanted was authoritative sanction. In June 1918, it was officially announced that the Secretary of War had authorized the calling of colored nurses in the national service. Colored nurses were assigned to the base hospitals at Camp Funston, Kansas; Camp Grant, Rockford, Illinois; Camp Dodge, Des Moines, Iowa; Camp Taylor, Louisville, Kentucky; Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio, and Camp Dix, Wrightstown, New Jersey. Unfortunately, before any considerable change in existing circumstances surrounding this branch of service could be made, the Armistice was signed and history will never know

what the colored woman might have done on the battlefields of France as a Red Cross Nurse. Rumor, more or less authentic, states that over 300 colored nurses were on the battlefields, though their complexion disguised their racial identity.<sup>21</sup>

This keenly felt “exclusion from overseas travel” experienced by black women lies at the heart of Dunbar-Nelson’s war poem “I Sit and Sew,” which, due to its brevity and relative obscurity, bears inclusion here in its entirety.

### I Sit and Sew

I sit and sew-a useless task it seems,  
My hands grown tired, my head weighed down with dreams-  
The panoply of war, the martial tread of men  
Grim-faced, stern-eyed, gazing beyond the ken  
Of lesser souls, whose eyes have not seen Death  
Nor learned to hold their lives but as a breath-  
But - I must sit and sew.

I sit and sew-my heart aches with desire-  
That pageant terrible, that fiercely pouring fire  
On wasted fields, and writhing grotesque things  
Once men. My soul in pity flings  
Appealing cries, yearningly only to go  
There in that holocaust of hell, those fields of woe-  
But - I must sit and sew.

The little useless seam, the idle patch;  
Why dream I here beneath my homely thatch,  
When there they lie in sodden mud and rain,  
Pitifully calling me, the quick ones and the slain?  
You need me, Christ! It is no roseate dream  
That beckons me - this pretty futile seam,  
It stifles me - God, must I sit and sew?<sup>22</sup>

Dunbar-Nelson wrote “I Sit and Sew” during a particularly turbulent period in her life after her marriage to the celebrated writer Paul Laurence Dunbar ended in separation. Born Alice Ruth Moore on July 19, 1875 in New Orleans, she was the only daughter of a seaman and a seamstress. After graduating from a two-year teachers’ program at Straight

University (now Dillard University), she embarked on a teaching career that would span more than thirty-six years. But teaching, one of only a few career opportunities available for black women, was not her only interest. In addition to studying nursing and stenography, Dunbar-Nelson played classical and popular music in various New Orleans groups, and edited a women's section of a black fraternity newspaper, the *Journal of the Ledge*. These varied experiences and the observations gleaned from them became the basis for her first work, *Violets and Other Tales*, a sentimental collection of sketches and poems that thematically turn on the melancholy inherent in love and life. As Gloria T. Hull suggests, "the advanced juvenilia of the volume is a dress rehearsal for Dunbar-Nelson's more mature performances."<sup>23</sup>

Within a year after the publication of *Violets*, the twenty-one-year-old schoolteacher moved with her family to Massachusetts. It was there that she began to correspond with Paul Laurence Dunbar, who purportedly had become enamored of the young Alice Moore Nelson after seeing her photograph in the literary section of a Boston newspaper. Dunbar's initial letter of interest spawned a nearly two-year span of correspondence between the two before they actually met in 1897. Although Alice Moore Nelson had been teaching at Public School 83 in Brooklyn and had assisted in the establishment of the White Rose Mission in Harlem, later known as the White Rose Home for Girls in Harlem, she married Paul Dunbar in March 1898 and moved with him to Washington, D.C. But the marriage would last only four years.

But it was during this brief marriage to Paul Dunbar that Alice Dunbar-Nelson wrote her second book, *The Goodness of St. Rocque, and Other Stories*, which was a



compilation of fourteen sketches of Creole life in New Orleans. Here she moves away from the sentimentality and superficiality that plagued *Violets and Other Stories*, and moves into solid character description and local-color tableau school of writing that was being masterfully advanced by fellow Louisianan Kate Chopin, and the early New England environmentalist Sarah Orne Jewett. This second work met with favor from the critics and was touted as a collection of “delightful Creole stories, all bright and full of the true Creole air of easy-going, brief and pleasing, instinct with the passion and romance of the people who will ever be associated with such names as Bayou Teche and Lake Pontchartrain.”<sup>24</sup> The title story is the most noteworthy. Showcasing her emerging talent for rich description and apt dialect, Dunbar-Nelson relates the story of a Creole woman who practices New Orleans voodoo and Catholic ritual to recapture the affection of an errant lover.

In 1902, with her marriage to Paul Dunbar ending in a turbulent separation, Alice Ruth Moore Dunbar moved to Wilmington, Delaware, where she taught at Howard University and continued her literary career, often contributing short stories and poems to various journals. From 1902 to 1920, she edited *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquence* and *The Dunbar Speaker and Entertainer*, where “I Sit and Sew” first appeared. However, it and most of her poems received little public recognition until Countee Cullen included “I Sit and Sew” as well as “”Snow in October” and “Sonnet” in his collection of black poets, *Caroling Dusk*, which appeared in 1927.

In her study of Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Angelina Weld Grimke and Georgia Douglas Johnson as contributors “to the brightness”<sup>25</sup> of the Harlem Renaissance, Gloria

T. Hull avers that although “I Sit and Sew” is a war poem, its greater import is found in the manner in which “a woman chafes against the ‘useless task’ of sewing while more important fighting is needed.”<sup>26</sup> Hull’s contention is that although the poem questions the desirability of war, the speaker’s sense of uselessness is occasioned by society’s culturally and politically defined sexual roles. While one must concur with Hull that the tone of the poem creates a mood of oppression and exclusion, this is not a feminist poem solely concerned with sexual roles, but rather one that laments the rejection of black women in overseas relief work. And it is Dunbar-Nelson’s Byronic use of dashes within the first two stanzas that illuminates the source of this sense of exclusion and fragmentation.

As the woman repetitively performs the useless task of sewing, her head is “weighed down with dreams” and these dreams are not, as Hull would suggest of sexual equality, but rather dreams of the “panoply” or ceremonial grandeur of war where “grim-faced” and “stern-eyed” men have not yet succumbed to death or “learned to hold their lives but as a breath.” The dash at the end of line six not only indicates the completion of the main thrust of the first stanza, but also signals the speaker’s return from the world of reverie to the repetitive and seemingly inconsequential state of her particular reality. The world, which the speaker sets up in the first stanza, is the battlefield of military, not sexual, war.

In the second stanza, the speaker’s dreams have been replaced by desire, and “the panoply of war” is now a “terrible pageant” played out on “wasted fields” and “fields of woe.” The grim-faced men of the first stanza have become, like the soldiers of Mary Borden’s short stories, merely “grotesque things” and the speaker yearns to go to the dead

and dying “in that holocaust of hell.” While the first stanza depicts a world where soldiers have not yet seen death nor become aware of the temporality of their beings, the second stanza reduces the soldier to some sort of inanimate object. Yet it is the speaker’s soul that is willing to travel to the depths of hell in an act of salvation. Thus, the speaker is consumed with a desire that, like angelism, is preceded by intention and followed by action existing only within the mind, for the sole path of action afforded her is to sit and sew. Her dreams and desires to speak and act deliberately, to be angelic, cannot be realized, and thus she must return to her specific reality, the diabolic state of silent or passive inaction.

The conclusion of the poem focuses on the useless and futile seam that the speaker is sewing. The function of a seam is to join two separate, and often similar in weave, sections of cloth cut from the same original bolt. But it is the seamstress who, in cutting out the sections of cloth, which she endeavors to construct into something hitherto nonexistent, must fashion the seam in such a way as to withstand the physical conditions that threaten to divide the joined sections. The speaker here finds the seam not strong or sufficiently able to bear up under future adversities, but rather it is useless and futile. Like the manner in which women are all intrinsically part of the same bolt, they have been divided by the seamstress war relief agency that vainly tries to reconstruct into a whole the divided pieces. Division, or the desire to construct a whole from parts, permeates the poem and comes to a resounding conclusion when the speaker cries out, “You need me, Christ!”

The typical cry of the petitioner who painfully calls out to Christ to be near is now inverted, as the need becomes Christ's, not the supplicant's. The customary division that exists between Christ and his flock, a division based upon power and glory ameliorated by grace, now becomes blurred as both the speaker and Christ are the harbingers of salvation and, as found in Galatians 2:20-21, have lived, died and live again, one within the other.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Righteousness, or the seam that unites two disparate pieces of cloth, can only come through grace, for if it comes through man's law, legislative action rather than moral persuasion, Christ has died in vain.

The call to Christ also reflects the continuation of the myth of the soldier as a Christ-like image. Those who "lie in sodden mud and rain," "the quick ones and the slain," call out to the speaker, and she calls back that she apprehends that she is indeed needed. But the call and the dream that beckon her, so painfully fraught with the divisive existence of bestial inaction vying with and seeking to thwart angelic intention, is "no roseate dream," not an optimistic one, but one that stifles and strangles. The poem concludes with the speaker, unable to act on her own, and admitting that the division and exclusion she experiences because of color, not gender, is a suffocating "futile seam," asking God how long she must sew.

While many critics, and Hull among them, have averred that the poem ends on a pessimistic, almost fatalistic note, in truth it is highly optimistic when one understands

that the answer to the abiding question, “God, must I sit and sew?” has hitherto been answered in Psalm 126:5-6. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” The one oppressed, the target of the propaganda of exclusion, shall ultimately triumph, although Nietzsche would contend that the oppressed will only triumph through a cleverness born of remaining silent and watchful.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche suggests that *ressentiment*, or resentment, often becomes a creative force in a slave mentality, i.e., the lower class or outside other, that is primarily reactive. The master class or noble’s regard for the lower class is one of a passing contempt that does not consume, whereas, for the slave, resentment for the master class becomes a consuming passion that eventually becomes the primary focus of the slave’s attention.

The noble man leads a simple life where no slight remains with him for very long, and no real or imagined injury is held onto. His is a life squarely within the present. In contrast, the man of resentment allows things to build within him as he holds onto the recollection of all slights and injuries that ultimately develop into a resounding hatred for the noble. His emphasis is on the past, or a future where vengeance is obtained against an evil enemy. Thus, as Nietzsche explains, the presence of evil becomes a construct created by and subscribed to by the man of resentment.

The resentment of the noble man himself, if it comes over him, consumes and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction and therefore does not poison. On the other hand, in countless cases it just doesn’t appear, whereas in the case of all weak and powerless people it is unavoidable. The noble man cannot take his enemies, his misfortunes, even his bad deed seriously for

very long - that is the mark of a strong, complete nature, in whom there is a surplus of plastic, creative, healing power which also can make one forget. Such a man with one shrug throws off him all those worms, which eat into other men. Only here is possible the real “love for one’s enemy.” How much respect a noble man already has for his enemies! And such a response is already a bridge to love. In fact, he demands his enemy for himself, as his mark of honour. By contrast, imagine for yourself “the enemy” as a man of resentment conceives him, and right here we have his action, his creation: he has conceptualized “the evil enemy,” “the evil one,” and as a fundamental idea - and from that he now thinks his way to an opposite image and counterpart, a “good man” - himself!<sup>27</sup>

Using Nietzsche’s definition, the noble man of 1917 was the black man who, having been discriminated against and subjected to humiliations and indignations by local draft boards and Army officers, threw off all the worms that eat into other men and became part of the black stevedore regiments, labor battalions, development battalions, pioneer infantry and two black fighting organizations, the 92d Division and the 93d Division (Provisional). Whatever bitterness might have existed within the hearts of America’s blacks, most of black society was stirred by Wilson’s declaration that “we must make the world safe for democracy.” Roscoe Conkling Simmons, a nephew of Booker T. Washington, pledged, “Where he [Wilson] commands one to go, I shall go.”<sup>28</sup> W. E. B. DuBois, writing in *The Crisis*, urged all blacks to support the war effort through enlistment, factory work or the purchase of liberty bonds. “We urge this despite our deep sympathy with the reasonable and deep-seated feeling of revolt among Negroes at the persistent insult and discrimination to which they are subject and will be subject even when they do their patriotic duty.”<sup>29</sup>

But not every black leader could so easily shrug off all the worms that consume him. Francis Grimke, a clergyman from Washington, D.C., proclaimed: “Men of darker hue have no rights which white men are bound to respect. And it is this narrow, contracted, contemptible undemocratic idea of democracy that we have been fighting to make the world safe for, if we have been fighting to make it safe for democracy at all.”<sup>30</sup> Although most blacks responded to DuBois’s position and demonstrated their patriotism through enlistment, the government became increasingly suspicious that German agents, operating in the United States, were attempting to capitalize about past injustices and woo them into positions as spies and infiltrators. In actuality, only a small number of black citizens were approached by German agents and generally had little sympathy for them. However, the majority of blacks did feel that making the United States free for democracy for all its citizens should take precedence over freeing Europe from a German threat. This feeling of dual purpose, of doing patriotic duty while harboring resentment toward the government that had disenfranchised them, plagued many black Americans in 1917 and is the central theme in Alice Dunbar-Nelson’s one-act play, *Mine Eyes Have Seen*, published in *The Crisis* in 1918. Gloria T. Hull describes the play as “literature with a purpose or, one may say, propaganda. Its blatant intent is to persuade black people to support the war.”<sup>31</sup>

Although Hull’s contention is well founded, and Dunbar-Nelson herself had consistently argued that all blacks, but particularly black women “when disaffection threatened, fostered patriotism and overcame propaganda with simple splendid loyalty,”<sup>32</sup> The greater import of the play is found in the manner in which Dunbar-Nelson raises the

question of race and national identity. Wars are fought primarily for territory and to define nations. Yet, how does one define the national identity of the United States if racial minorities are systematically excluded from that identity? How does a nation define itself when it practices the ruthless realism of segregation and discrimination, yet presents to the world, most particularly in Wilson's declaration of war speech, an all-inclusive expression of nationalistic solidarity and resolve? These are the basic concerns of *Mine Eyes Have Seen*.

Whereas "I Sit and Sew" reflects the black woman's experience of exclusion from participation in war, *Mine Eyes Have Seen* centers on the black man's experience. It is a highly political play that questions whether a young black American should serve in the army of a country that excludes his people from its national identity. Chris, a young draftee, asks:

Yes, of course, you're afraid, Little Sister, why shouldn't you be? Haven't you had your soul shriveled with fear since we were driven like dogs from our home? And for what? Because we were living like Christians. Must I go and fight for the nation that let my father's murder go unpunished? That killed my mother - that took away my chances for making a man out of myself? Look at us - you - Dan, a shell of a man -"<sup>33</sup>

The manner in which American society has regarded the black man as machine or animal to be used and then cast aside is alluded to in the characterization of the older brother, Dan, who was "maimed for life in a factory of hell! Useless - useless - broken on the wheel."<sup>34</sup> Having been burned out of their home by Southern vigilantes who killed their father and indirectly their mother, and then forced to flee to the North because of "the notices posted on the fence for us to leave town because niggers have no business



having such a decent home,”<sup>35</sup> the two brothers and their sister are faced with the realization that life in the manufacturing cities of the North is no panacea, for although the discrimination is not as blatant, it is prevalent.

Dunbar-Nelson places the two brothers on opposite sides of the debate wherein Dan, acting as the noble man, lives squarely in the present and admonishes his brother for seeking retribution. However, Chris represents Nietzsche’s man of *ressentiment*, the slave mentality, who finds evil within this cause designed by the

politicians who play with men’s souls, as if they are cards - dealing them out, a hand here, in the Somme - a hand there, in Palestine - a hand there, in the Alps - a hand there, in Russia - and because the cards don’t match well, call it a misdeal, gather them up, throw them in the discard, and call for a new deal of a million human, suffering souls. And must I be the Deuce of Spades?<sup>36</sup>

As the debate between the brothers continues, a young Jewish boy enters and draws parallels between the experience of Jews in Russia and blacks in America offering that “there isn’t a wrong you can name that your race has endured that mine has not suffered, too.”<sup>37</sup> The commonality of the experience of exclusion is further advanced by the arrival in the small apartment of Mrs. O’Neill, a widow whose husband was killed in the war. While Chris maintains that he will not go as it is not his people’s fight, and Dan reminds him that black men have always participated in all of America’s battles since the Revolutionary War in 1776, Mrs. O’Neill recalls: “’Tis me ould man who said at first ‘twasn’t his quarrel. His Oireland bled an’ the work of them devils to try to make him a traitor nearly broke his heart - but he said he’d go to do his bit - an’ here I am.”<sup>38</sup>

When a muleteer, who has just returned from the Front, confirms the widespread propaganda that the Germans “crucified children,” Dan reminds Chris of the “glorious inheritance of his race,” and speaks of Christian charity.

It is not for us to visit retribution. Nor to wish hatred on others.  
Let us rather remember the good that has come to us. Love of  
humanity is above the small considerations of time or place or  
race or sect. Can't you be big enough to feel pity for the little  
crucified French children - for the ravished Polish girls, even as  
their mothers must have felt sorrow, if they had known, for *our*  
burned and maimed little ones? Oh, Mothers of Europe, we be  
of one blood, you and I!<sup>39</sup>

Here Dunbar-Nelson is mirroring the second stage propaganda found in the short stories of Dorothy Canfield Fisher and the theme of Madeleine Z. Doty's short story “Die Mutter: A True Story” that the scope of motherhood, nurture and compassion is a global experience affecting all of civilization. Like Doty, Dunbar-Nelson seeks to blur national, racial and political demarcations in demonstrating that the black experience in America is akin to that of the Russian Jew, the Irish Catholic and all oppressed people. Yet, if the oppressed seek retribution against the oppressor and refuse to participate in the war, they are slaves to memory that dwells in the quest for revenge and retribution.

The play ends as a passing band is playing “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” As Dan softly sings the opening lines, Chris turns from the window and declares that this country is his and he shall enlist. Claire M. Tylee has suggested that the recruitment poster *Enlist - On Which Side of the Window are You?* (Appendix E) was the probable influence for the final tableau of *Mine Eyes Have Seen* because “amongst the hundreds of propaganda posters published, none seems to have displayed or addressed African-Americans.”<sup>40</sup> Although one can concur with Tylee's first assertion that Dunbar-Nelson

was influenced by the recruitment poster by Laura Bray, at least one propaganda poster did exist in 1918 which was specifically designed to induce African-Americans to enlist, and Dunbar-Nelson would have been familiar with it.

*True Sons of Freedom* (Appendix F), created in 1918 by Charles Gustrine, depicts African American soldiers fighting German soldiers as a head and shoulders portrait of Abraham Lincoln looks down from above. The inclusion of Lincoln is noteworthy in that it suggests that “The Great Emancipator” sanctions black participation in the war, as well as the Republican Party, in which Dunbar-Nelson was extremely active. Among the war activities she organized while associated with the Republican Party was a massive Flag Day parade-demonstration on June 14, 1918 that 6,000 blacks participated in called “the greatest day in the history of Delaware colored people, where the loyalty of the Race to the American flag was the gist of the many brilliant and patriotic addresses.”<sup>41</sup>

In *Mine Eyes Have Seen*, Alice Dunbar-Nelson offers that national identity is not connected to racial identity but rather to one’s unquestioned support of and participation in political and military directives. But, as Tylee has pointed out, “the emotional power of the play comes from its demonstration of the idea of common humanity.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, for Dunbar-Nelson, national identity for the black man is based upon the willingness to fight for the rights of all humanity and forgive those who have rendered past injuries or, as Nietzsche has defined it, to be the noble man rather than the slave. The emphasis on love of humanity, a kinship with the mothers of Europe, being all of one blood, sets up a relationship between the soldier and Christ, a common element of British first stage propaganda. But Dunbar-Nelson goes beyond male propagandists and, like Dorothy

Canfield Fisher who established a commonality of existence between white American and French mothers, establishes a kinship between all white and all black mothers. Whereas Canfield Fisher and Borden targeted primarily white women as their audiences, in *Mine Eyes Have Seen* Dunbar-Nelson addresses the global audience of black Americans, Jewish and Irish Americans, and American Socialists. Her message is that black and white races are linked through one blood, the blood of Christ, into a common love of humanity. If black Americans show that they are willing to die to protect white woman and children, then white women will be moved to defend black children. The play ends to the strains “As He died to make men holy, let us die to make them free!” reminding Americans of a heritage not dependent upon a single racial or previous national identity.

Tyler asserts that with *Mine Eyes Have Seen*, Dunbar-Nelson is developing a sense of black feminism that fellow black women writers, such as Angelina Weld Grimké and Mary Burrill, had recognized as a political power against lynching. By and through discourses on the universal experience of motherhood, white women could be prompted to support an anti-lynching campaign and thus restore integrity to black men who were frequently regarded as rapists, black women seen as prostitutes, and white women who were nothing more than property to be used as justification for the lynching of black males. But in 1918, the majority of white women were reluctant to view lynching as a means of control over both black men and white women, because to do so would make them painfully aware of how a white paternalistic society utilizes one disenfranchised group to hold in check another. Mary Burrill, a friend of Alice Dunbar-Nelson’s, sought to break down this ambivalence on the part of white women in her anti-lynching play,

*Aftermath*, in which a sister responds to her brother's questions about the lynching of their father.

*Aftermath* is the story of a black soldier who returns to his home in South Carolina when he and his company pass through Charleston by train on their way to Camp Reed. Although his sister and grandmother make various excuses as to the reason why his father is not present, a neighbor unwittingly tells the young man that his father was lynched after getting into an argument with a white man about the price of cotton. Upon hearing the circumstances surrounding his father's death, the young soldier bitterly says: "I'm sick o' these w'ite folds doin's - we're 'fine, trustworthy feller citizens' when they're handin' out guns, an' Liberty Bonds, an' chuckin' us off to die; but we ain't a damn thing when it comes to handin' us the rights we done fought an' bled fu'!"<sup>43</sup> But the incident Burrill dramatizes is not simply imagined, but one based upon the experience of Henry Johnson, a hero of the 369<sup>th</sup> Regiment from New York--the "Harlem Hellfighters."

The "Harlem Hellfighters" were not conscripts but rather black soldiers who had voluntarily enlisted despite the Army's insistence that they would neither train nor fight with white troops. Most of the unit was comprised of laborers from New York City who had worked as waiters, doormen, messengers and janitors, who trained in Lafayette Hall in Manhattan with wooden sticks and broom handles. Eventually, the U.S. Army decided to send the regiment to train at Camp Wadsworth in South Carolina, but such a protest erupted from the citizens of Spartanburg that the local Chamber of Commerce drafted resolutions protesting the training of black troops at there. The protests, however, had

little effect and in early October 1917, the 15<sup>th</sup> Negro Infantry, to become known as the 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry when it arrived in France, detrained at Camp Wadsworth.

In the early morning hours of May 15, 1918, Henry Johnson was on duty near the frontline in France. Hearing the sound of barbed wire being cut, he moved cautiously toward the wire when a hailstorm of grenades began falling. Under attack from more than two-dozen Germans, armed only with a rifle and then, when his ammunition ran out, a bolo knife, Johnson killed four of the enemy and captured the remaining Germans who had seriously wounded his companion on duty, Pte. Needham Roberts, whom Johnson ultimately rescued. Johnson himself received multiple injuries in the attack but survived to become the first American to be awarded the Croix de Guerre. It is this black hero who is described in *Aftermath* as he comes home to learn that while he has been defending France from its enemy, the black man's enemy had lynched his father.

John is tall and straight - a good soldier and a strong man. He wears the uniform of a private in the American Army. One hand is clasped in both of Millie's. In the other, he carries an old-fashioned valise. The War Cross is pinned on his breast. On his sleeve three chevrons tell mutely of wounds suffered in the cause of freedom.<sup>44</sup>

On November 11, 1918 at 5:00 a.m., in a railway carriage at Rethondes, in the Forest of Compiègne, a weary German delegation signed the Armistice and the ceasefire was set for 11 a.m.--the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. But although the Armistice ended the fighting, it would be several months before all the troops were sent home. The 369<sup>th</sup> Regiment was recalled from the Rhine region to rejoin the American Army in France. For the first time, the entire 92d Division was assembled as a fighting unit, but these combat veterans were assigned to policing the camps, doing

construction work and serving as cooks and kitchen police. Several black soldiers were designated as general laborers and performed such basic tasks as salvaging equipment and materials from the battlefields, clearing away barbed wire, filling in trenches and searching for and destroying of unexploded ordinance. All the detritus of war had to be cleared away and to the black soldiers of the 93d Division fell the task.

Before the battlefields could be cleared of equipment, barbed wire and ordinance, bodies and parts of bodies of men killed in action had to be collected and disposed of. Over 6,000 black soldiers were sent to Romagne to construct the Argonne National Cemetery where all bodies within a radius of fifty kilometers were collected and buried. Many of the bodies were already in advanced stages of decomposition. As if the task before them were not gruesome enough, the housing provided for the black troops was less than acceptable and lacked many commonplace necessities, such as adequate food and sanitation. However, these men of the 93d Division recovered and buried 23,000 bodies. Military authorities tried to rationalize the use of only black soldiers in performing these horrific deeds by stating that the assignment was one of honor and glory. An unidentified American politician, visiting the Argonne Cemetery, was reported to have said:

What a wonderful sight to see those boys march up the hillsides bearing the crosses to the resting places of the sacred dead! It reminds us of that other sacred scene in history when an African bore the cross of Christ up the little green hill far away.

It was a privilege for me to shake the hands of these boys laden with the aroma of the dead. I said to them: "Boys, I am proud of you. You have done the most sacred task of the war. What others refused to do, you have done willingly and beautifully. I

promise you that when I go back home I will speak to no audience that I do not tell them of what you have done.”<sup>45</sup>

When the first of the black soldiers started to return home during the early months of 1919, the Ku Klux Klan, which had been revived in 1915, became a highly visible force in many Southern towns and rural areas. Fueled by the fear that the returning veterans might believe that the equality and fraternity they had experienced in France would be tolerated in the United States, the Klan openly paraded through the streets of most Southern states. In New Orleans, an unidentified white speaker greeted returning black veterans with the following address: “You niggers are wondering how you are going to be treated after the war. Well, I’ll tell you, you are going to be treated exactly like you were before the war; this is a white man’s country and we expect to rule it.”<sup>46</sup>

As the year 1919 unfolded, lynchings increased and mob violence gave way to the bloody race riots in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Omaha, Norfolk and Charleston. But on a February morning in 1919, on Fifth Avenue in New York, the proud men of the 369<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment marched home to Harlem. Thirteen hundred black men and eighteen white officers marched behind Colonel William Hayward as the regimental band, under the direction of Big Jim Europe and led by drum major Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, proudly marched in the tight formation characteristic of the French Army. These were the Hellfighters, the only unit allowed to fly a state flag, the only American unit awarded the Croix de Guerre and the regiment that led the march to the Rhine. As the Harlem Hellfighters made their way up Fifth Avenue, Sergeant Henry Johnson was the hero of the moment as he rode in an open limousine provided by the city. However, New York Major John F. Hylan was in Palm Beach and the city fathers had refused to proclaim the day an



official holiday. Although a hero to the French Army and his fellow countrymen, Sergeant Henry Johnson received no special recognition from the United States Army, no commendation from the government of his own country.

The black man returning from the war was very much like the characters that were to come in the novels of Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and John Dos Passos. They had lost their innocence and their illusions, but unlike the lost white generation who attempted to fill the void with the excesses of pleasure, American blacks had learned the value of self-reliance and, in returning to an ungrateful nation, understood that perseverance and determination were all there were to believe in.

On March 21, 2002, following a campaign of several years, Henry Johnson was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. New York Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles Schumer have proposed legislation that will award Johnson the Medal of Honor in recognition of his heroic service. At a ceremony at Johnson's grave in Arlington, Virginia, New York Governor George Pataki said:

For this American hero to be denied his due honors simply due to the color of his skin is a tragic yet blatant reminder of the rampant racism that existed in this nation during the First World War. The time is now to right this eight decades-long injustice, and finally recognize the valor, patriotism and grit of a man who was both a great New Yorker and an exemplary American soldier.

For over eight decades the propaganda of exclusion had propagated the myth of the black soldier as subhuman, untrainable and unintelligent. The long overdue awarding of the Distinguished Service Cross to Henry Johnson explodes the myth, not only for Johnson, but for all black soldiers for whom the inheritance of a national citizenship--what

Alice Dunbar-Nelson saw as an identity of political rather than racial exclusion--has been too long in coming.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *America and the World War* (Toronto: McLeod Allen, 1915), pp. 144, 209.

<sup>2</sup> Paul A. C. Koistinen, *Mobilizing for Modern War: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1865-1919* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), pp. 133-34.

<sup>3</sup> John Whiteclay Chambers II, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York: Free Press, 1987), p. 165.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Palmer, *Newton D. Baker: America at War* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1931), p. 218.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Crowell and Robert Wilson, *How America Went to War* (New Haven: The Yale University Press, 1921), p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> *The Battery Book - A History of Battery "A" 306 F. A.* (New York: DeVinne Press, 1921). pp. 37-38.

<sup>7</sup> Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War* (Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), p. 87.

<sup>8</sup> George O. Ferguson, "The Intelligence of Negroes at Camp Lee, Virginia," *School and Society* 9 (14 June 1919), p. 726.

<sup>9</sup> Carl. C. Brigham. *A Study of American Intelligence* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1923), p. 191.

<sup>10</sup> Ashley Montague, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth* (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 389.

<sup>11</sup> E. Crowder, *Second Report of the Provost Marshal General* (Washington, D.C., 1919), p. 192.

<sup>12</sup> Federal Council, General War-Time Committee, file 1 (minutes of conference with Keppel and Maj. Gen. Frank McIntyre, 25 September 1918).

<sup>13</sup> Emmett J. Scott, *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), pp. 60-61.

<sup>14</sup> Robert L. Bullard, *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War* (New York: Doubleday, 1925), p. 295.

<sup>15</sup> Adele Hunton and Kathryn Johnson, *Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces* (New York: AMS Press, 1920), pp. 184-85.

<sup>16</sup> William MacIntyre, *Colored Soldiers* (Macon: Burke, 1923), p. 136.

<sup>17</sup> Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1921), p. 524.

<sup>18</sup> Hunton and Johnson, p. 85.

<sup>19</sup> Scott, p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> Hunton and Johnson, p. 135.

<sup>21</sup> Alice Dunbar-Nelson, "Negro Women in War Work" in *Scott's Official History of The American Negro in the World War*, pp. 378-79.

<sup>22</sup> "I Sit and Sew," in *The Dunbar Speaker and Entertainer*, ed. Alice Dunbar Nelson, (Naperville, Ill: Nichols, 1920), p. 1

<sup>23</sup> Gloria T. Hull, *Color, Sex & Poetry. Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> Pittsburgh *Christian Advocate*, December 21, 1899.

<sup>25</sup> Hull, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche: The First Complete and Authorized English Translation*, Oscar Levy, ed. (New York: Gordon Press, 1974), vol. 13, p. 231.

<sup>28</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York: Knopf, 1930), p.233.

<sup>29</sup> *The Crisis*, June 1917, p. 59.

<sup>30</sup> Carter G. Woodson, ed., *The Works of Francis J. Grimke* (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1942), 1:563.

<sup>31</sup> Hull, p. 71.

<sup>32</sup> Dunbar-Nelson, "Negro Women in War Work," p. 397.

<sup>33</sup> Alice Dunbar-Nelson. *Mine Eyes Have Seen. War Plays by Women*, Claire M. Tylee with Elaine Turner and Agnes Cardinal, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>40</sup> Tylee, *War Plays by Women*, p. 28.

<sup>41</sup> Hull, p. 67.

<sup>42</sup> Tylee, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Powell Burrill, *Aftermath. Black Female Playwrights, An Anthology of Plays before 1950*, ed. Kathy A. Perkins (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 65.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>45</sup> H. H. Proctor, *Between Black and White* (New York: Pilgrim, 1925), p. 164.

<sup>46</sup> Joshua E. Blanton, "Men in the Making." *Southern Workman* 48 (January 1, 1988).

## Chapter Six

### Negating the Distance Between Home and War in Willa Cather's *One of Ours*

Be happy, young man, while you are young,  
And let your heart give you joy in  
The days of your youth.  
Follow the ways of your heart and whatever  
Your eyes see; but know that for all these things  
God will bring you to judgment.  
So then, banish anxiety from your heart  
And cast off the troubles of your body.  
--*Ecclesiastes*

While church bells pealed across the United States on November 11, 1918, Willa Siebert Cather and Ernest Dalton Trumbo, quite separately and distinctly, joined in the celebratory jubilation in New York City, each one unaware of the other's existence. Within two decades, they would respond to the legacy of the Great War and, unlike Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald who viewed post-war societal values as nothing but sham, turn the sharp disillusionment of realizing that this had not been the war to end all wars into an understanding that the propaganda of protest must be grounded in the seemingly mundane and unsparingly honest language of war and its legacies. While Hemingway asserted that World War I had revealed the lies inherent in abstract words such as glory, honor, courage or hallow,<sup>1</sup> and John Dos Passos characterized the same lies as the "rabies of war itself that choke one like poison gas,"<sup>2</sup> Willa Cather and Dalton Trumbo contended that the cause or ideal one must die for, or be forever altered by, is not the locus of abstracted lies or an apocalyptic vision of domestic and global cataclysms, but rather a source of or impetus for a creativity and purpose hitherto unrealized.

While one might rightfully contend that Cather's portrayal of war as a form of personal salvation is akin to Brooke's sentiment that through war one is released from "a world grown old and cold and weary," Trumbo's sense of purpose and salvation is that trauma, suffering and institutionalized loneliness transforms the faceless, seemingly insensitive mass of humanity from complacent automatons into individuals whose purpose becomes to enunciate the horrors of war. Yet, beneath these painfully obvious conclusions that have hitherto been advanced by Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen in their war poetry, lies a middle ground between the extremes, a vantage point that now distanced from the horror by the passage of time recollects not in tranquility, but in contemplative musing. After a propaganda of purpose, activism, response and ultimately protest comes the subtle, yet painful process of reflection and internalization. But, those who are closest to the playing field, those who relentlessly experience the game of attrition and stalemate, are not the ones whose recollections we wish to preserve, for their memory of war is, as Philip D. Berdler has suggested, one of

death depicted [as] never gallant sacrifice. It is not grand, valorous, brave death. It is bowel ripping, head-shattering, body-rending death. It is the kind of death that makes men scream for their mothers, soil their trousers, dissolve themselves into whimpering wrecks. Moreover, it is death on the whole vast scale of modern mechanization (March, XV).<sup>3</sup>

But death in war, even in the manner in which it reverts the individual to a stage of infancy, does not reduce as Hemingway contends the abstractions of honor, glory and courage from the rank of truth to lie. Abstractions are by definition devoid of the concrete and thus cannot be hierarchized. There are no gradations of abstractions, no qualifications. That which is impossible to objectify, to render specific, cannot be

qualified by another abstraction, such as Hemingway seeks to do in declaring that a concrete object, particularly war and specifically World War I, ultimately reveals the abstract conception of the lie inherent in yet other abstractions, such as honor and glory.

As Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen and Edmund Blunden have amply shown more positively than any Lost Generation conceit, war does not produce an antithesis to any pre-war abstraction, but rather it produces tangible, sensual objects--dead soldiers. Therefore, the need to create a hierarchy or catalog of abstractions related to war is most prevalent among those who are more removed from the experience of trench warfare than those who find themselves in its very midst.

The essence, and indeed the very function of post-war propaganda is to create politically charged abstractions that will dictate the course of social, political and economic postwar policies. For Hemingway, the need to frame World War I within a matrix of negatively charged associations of war as lie is but a reflection of the dishonesty of his own war experience. Although Frederic Conder relates "the thing that struck [him] the most during a visit to France [was] the silence of the soldier and his absolute freedom from bombast and high sounding phrases,"<sup>4</sup> Hemingway finds nothing positive or redemptive in stoicism. Rather, he finds it all rather embarrassing.

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of

places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.<sup>5</sup>

The source of Hemingway's embarrassment is not the seeming hollowness of sacrifice and glory on the battlefields, but an embarrassment or shame that comes from a personal lack of dignity and a feeling of being apart. In *Exile's Return*, literary critic Malcolm Cowley, an American Field Service ambulance driver like Hemingway, asserts that the voyeurism of war men that he and Hemingway participated in created a "spectator attitude" where volunteers remain detached and uninvolved.

The Annamites, little mud-colored men with the faces of perverted babies, watched from the ditches where they were breaking stone; the airplanes of three nations kept watch overhead, and we ourselves were watchers. It did not seem that we could ever be a part of all this.<sup>6</sup>

When an individual is removed from the arena of active and sanctioned participation and must therefore remain on the periphery, alienation can often become such an embarrassment that all abstractions, all associations that are symbolic in nature, and therefore angelic due to the requirement of internalization, become obscene. Hemingway's war service, an embarrassment in reality although a source of fictionalized pride, is, in truth, a short-lived career without demonstrable affiliation with glory, honor or courage. His actual service with the American Red Cross encompassed only a five-week period from June 4 to July 8, 1918, and Hemingway was in the ambulance corps for only half that time.



Hemingway was assigned to the Schio (Italy) Section 4 unit, which, because of its location well behind the lines of battle, experienced relative inactivity. Arlen J. Hansen reports:

Because of the relative inactivity of the Schio sector, only three of the unit's cars were put on call each day. Section 4 used mostly Fiats (it had seventeen of them, and only six Fords), two men usually assigned to each car, who traded off the driving. In other words, with only three cars out each day and two drivers per car, no one - including Hemingway - in Section 4 did much ambulancing that June. Hemingway understandably termed the operation "the Schio Country Club."<sup>7</sup>

By June 22, a mere eighteen days after his ambulance corps' duties commenced, Hemingway, having grown bored and petulant, abandoned his position and petitioned the Red Cross to allow him to distribute small food, candy and hygiene items to Italian soldiers encamped along the Piave River. Without a vehicle at his immediate disposal, and too impetuous to wait until one could be requisitioned for his use, Hemingway made his forays to the front by bicycle. His short-lived experiences as "a rolling bicycle canteen" became the basis for the short story "A Way You'll Never Be." Nick Adams, a young Red Cross volunteer on the Italian Front and Hemingway's alter ego, "circulates around to no purpose" and, in losing his way, becomes a danger and threat to those to whom he desires to minister.

There is in all the Nick Adams war stories a constant undertone of lying, a desire to avoid consequences while existing in a world where failure and unspoken truths abound. Indeed, the very structure of *Men Without Women*, the 1927 collection of stories in which the Nick Adams war stores are chronicled, is a repetition of the experiences of failure where boredom, confusion, restlessness, and little sense of movement are

prevalent. Wounds, whether emotional or physical, seem to be of the sort that others should encounter who literally or figuratively find themselves in an elemental confrontation with death. Hemingway, like Nick Adams, must confront a landscape over which he has no control, where a lack of authority and power erupts into a form of hysteria that prompts the young Hemingway to abandon the ambulance corps. The divided, stream of consciousness dialogue in “A Way You’ll Never Be” is a reflection of this sense of disempowerment.

Hemingway’s hysterical, nonsensical and obsessive quest for action found its mark on July 8 when an incoming round of explosives hit a forward-trench listening position into which Hemingway had crawled to mete out the candy and tobacco he was delivering to those in the trenches. Although nearly 277 pieces of shrapnel riddled his legs and lower body,<sup>8</sup> Hemingway reports that he carried a wounded soldier to safety before further machine gun fire decimated his right knee.<sup>9</sup> He was taken by ambulance to a field hospital near Treviso and later, on July 17, transported to a Red Cross hospital in Milan. Nearly six months later, on January 4, 1919, Hemingway departed from Genoa for New York aboard the Italian ship *Giuseppe Verdi*, “wearing a handsome Italian cape and carrying a superfluous cane.”<sup>10</sup> Although Hemingway is often touted as the most famous “gentleman volunteer,” the truth of the matter is that he drove an ambulance only once or twice during his five-week service on the Italian front.

Implicit within Hemingway’s war stories is the suggestion that how you behave in the face of death is what you are all about. The elemental confrontation with death reflects the essence of the man and what sort of character he truly is. When confronted

with the specter of death on the Italian Front, Hemingway contends that boredom and restlessness prompted his resignation from the ambulance corps rather than the more reliable reason that like Nick Adams, who cannot deal with the dualities of good and evil, life and death, beauty and destruction that exist in tandem within the theatre of war, he could neither accept nor function within a landscape over which he had no control. In his memoir, Carlyle Holt expresses the manner in which the landscape of war is a continually changing and unconquerable one for the ambulance driver.

Our life here is one of highlights. The transition from the absolute quiet and tranquility of peace to the rush and roar of war takes but an instant and all our impressions are kaleidoscopic in number and contrast. Sometimes we sit in the little garden behind our caserne in the evening, comfortably drinking beer and smoking or talking and watching the flash of cannon. Yet we may leave a spot like that and immediately be in the midst of the realities of war.<sup>11</sup>

Kerr Rainsford, an ambulance driver at Verdun, graphically recounts such a duality of life that Hemingway could not exist within.

Minute after minute, crowded together, absolutely stationary, loaded to the gunwales with sick and wounded, we waited for the roadway to clear and for the next shell to strike. Beside my wheel lay a horse still breathing but with both forelegs carried away at the body, and another lacking half its head. I took my load to an evacuation camp at Fleury-sur-Aire, a long ride over smooth, empty roads through a green and cheerful country, where flowers grew in front of the cottages and women were. It was like a month in the country.<sup>12</sup>

In truth, Hemingway's World War I experience is a continual one of escape, motivated by the desire to flee from a landscape that presents dual natures. On the day of his arrival in Milan for ambulance duty, a munitions factory exploded and Hemingway was assigned to clear the area of the remains of the dead. Recounting this experience

some years later in his short story “A Natural History of the Dead,” Hemingway describes the manner in which the dual nature of presence and absence of elements in the war environment had a debilitating and unsettling effect upon him.

I first saw inversion of the usual sex of the dead after the explosion of an ammunition factory, which had been situated in the countryside near Milan, Italy. Arriving where the munition plant had been, some of us were put to patrolling about those large stocks of munitions which for some reason had not exploded while others were put at extinguishing a fire which had gotten into the grass of an adjacent field; which task being concluded, we were ordered to search the immediate vicinity and surrounding field for bodies. We found and carried to an improvised mortuary a good number of these and, I must admit, frankly, the shock it was to find that these were women rather than men. In those days women had not yet commenced to wear their hair cut short, as they did later for several years in Europe and America, and the most disturbing thing, perhaps because it was the most unaccustomed, was the presence and, even more disturbing, the occasional absence of this long hair.<sup>13</sup>

Hemingway’s inability to accept or situate himself within the duality of a war landscape, coupled with his shock of literally unearthing women within that landscape, and his subterfuge concerning the extent and long term effects of his Red Cross service injuries, explain why he reacted with such a virulent spirit when Willa Cather’s *One of Ours* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1923. In a letter to Edmund Wilson, Hemingway ridiculed the concluding war scenes in the novel and was generally dismissive of Cather as a writer.

Look at *One of Ours*. [Pulitzer] Prize, big sale, people taking it seriously. You were in the war weren’t you? Wasn’t that last scene in the lines wonderful? Do you know where it came from? The battle scene in *Birth of a Nation*. I identified episode after episode. Catherized. Poor woman she had to get her war experience somewhere.<sup>14</sup>

Although some credence may be found in Hemingway's contention that Cather's portrayals of warfare are often trite, *One of Ours*, like *A Farewell to Arms*, is not a battle novel, but rather an early twentieth-century modern interpretation of alienation, its causes and its cures, from the perspective of heartland America. The American Midwest of the early twentieth century was Edenic in perception, if not in reality. It had not adopted the cynicism and impersonality of the Northeast or the sordid history of the South or the lawlessness of the West. The heartland of America, home to Cather and Hemingway, held the key as to the manner in which Americans would look back upon World War I, as well as wars to come.

Whereas *A Farewell to Arms* never moves out of war-torn Italy, *One of Ours* deftly moves back and forth from the idyllic and peaceful American Midwest to war-ravaged Europe where discord, aimlessness and ennui abide, not only within the landscape, but within those like Frederick Henry who seek to escape war rather than embrace it. Using the thoroughly modernist technique of juxtaposition, Cather superimposes the domestic landscape onto the landscape of war, and therefore creates a tension between home and duty, life and death, freedom and constraint. This sense of alienation and fragmentation, which lies at the heart of *One of Ours*, juxtaposed against the emotional and spiritual peace that comes with the fulfillment of personal or divinized purpose, is the very essence of fourth stage propaganda and its aim to assimilate all varying points of view into a single and inclusive point of view. For Cather in 1933, as well as for George Bush in 1990 and George W. Bush in 2003, the way to elicit support

and acceptance of a single political ideology or view of war is to make participation in war part of one's domestic, familial and personal landscape.

After the bands had stopped playing and the clapping and shouting had died away on November 11, 1918, Americans began to take stock of what nineteen months of active participation in the Great War had cost. Of the nearly four and one-half million Americans mobilized, fifty thousand had died in battle, over two hundred thousand had been wounded, and another fifty thousand lost to accident and sickness. Yet, the greatest casualty, the greatest loss, seemed to be an idealistic belief that as a young nation and a unified, united people, Americans were somehow safe from cynicism, aggression, hunger and deprivation. By 1921, World War I was becoming a source of embarrassment for Americans, and one that no one really wanted to talk about. It had been a war especially hard on infantrymen. Any division going into battle would ultimately remain in place until half its manpower had been decimated. For the young American infantryman, the stark reality was that either he or the pal standing next to him was going to be killed or wounded.

Although the French and the British had far greater casualties, the war never became the boondoggle it had for the United States in large part because their leaders, Clemenceau and Lloyd George, were not repudiated as Woodrow Wilson had been. Wilson had approached the peace table at Versailles with the League of Nations foremost in his mind. Clemenceau, desirous only of assuring France's security by crippling Germany economically and militarily, cared little about the League, thus forcing Wilson to give in to a hard peace in order to protect his own aims. However, when Henry Cabot

Lodge and the Republican Congress would not ratify the treaty and voted to keep the United States out of the League, Wilson, embittered by the defeat and suffering from the effects of the stroke that befell him before the defeat, served out his remaining term in ill health. Warren G. Harding, Wilson's successor, promised America "a return to normalcy." But, in the immediate postwar years, the normalcy of pre-war America no longer could be sought. Neither American politics nor society could be insulated or isolated from the chaos and upheaval of European nations ripped asunder.

While many Americans would desperately cling to the illusion that Harding's promise of a return to normalcy was possible, the experience of war had catapulted the country to the fore as a world power and altered the way its people would not only look at themselves, but their futures as well. The war years had made young men restless, desirous of something more meaningful or fulfilling than working as farmers or in factories. For young women, who had worked outside the confines of the home whether in munitions factories or in the manufacturing sector, the taste of economic and social freedom was not to be lost. The women's movement, which began in 1848, was rejuvenated, and in August 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, giving women the right to vote. With women's suffrage came a new identity as Victorian images ceased to find a niche in American society. The Gibson girl became "the modern woman," who was socially and politically empowered, often independent of husband and family.

While women were reshaping the meaning of normalcy, young men, and particularly African-American men, came to realize that the need for individual expression, whether political, social or economic, could not be achieved by emulating

those models of the past, but rather by discovering and following their own individual callings. But for many American artists and writers, there surfaced a belief that individual expression could not be found in an American society believed to be intellectually and culturally oppressive.

For those like Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and William Faulkner who felt the war had been fought for empty reasons to achieve questionable objectives, American values seemed but a sham and American society was corrupt and without hope. Cynical, egocentric and defeated, this “lost generation” became cast adrift in American society. Without direction and with no moorings to the culture they felt was forever gone, Hemingway and company could only survive as expatriates in Paris. Their postwar novels, such as *The Sun Also Rises*, *Three Soldiers* and *Soldiers Pay*, reflect the propaganda of America lost, without faith, devoid of purpose.

For Willa Cather, admittedly from a generation older than Hemingway’s, World War I had ushered in a new modernity wherein Harding’s promise of a return to normalcy could be an amalgamation of the propaganda of purpose of the early years of the war welded to a new sense of idealism and hope aimed towards not committing the same errors again by reflection on past history. This sense of purpose, yoked to a forward and ironically backward glance of guarded and informed optimism, is the essence of fourth stage propaganda and the foundation upon which Cather’s *One of Ours* rests. Although Hemingway was intent upon categorizing the Pulitzer Prize winning novel as a misguided war story, *One of Ours*, in and of itself a memorial to the dead through myth and myth



building, seeks to formulate a backward glance specifically to console a nation who had lost over one hundred thousand men.<sup>15</sup>

Emerging from nineteen months of unparalleled participation in a war that left many questioning not only the direction and aims of American politics, but more pointedly the future of a society left wondering if all its ideas and values were now archaic, surviving veterans and bereaved family members desperately needed a propaganda of purpose and promise that would effectively construct a mythology that would give a sense of order and meaning to their lives. Whereas President Harding would champion a propaganda espousing a return to some form of nebulous normalcy, and F. Scott Fitzgerald would invest in Jay Gatsby a sense of disillusionment in an American society that seemingly failed to live up to the ideals upon which it was conceived, Cather's revisionist focus shifts away from the ennui of normalcy or the whining of disillusionment and looks at the past as a springboard to a future with a purpose.

In her discussion of feminine literature in a male-dominated society, Adrienne Rich posits that revisionist examination is the key to survival. While her discussion is centered on the re-examination of feminist texts hitherto dismissed in a male-dominated canon, Rich's assertions underscore Cather's contention that the quest for mythologized heroes in immediate post-war years, the yearning upon which fourth stage propaganda relies to weld purpose with reflection and assimilation into an enduring memorial that justifies human carnage, must begin with the act of revisioning our ideals and values.

Re-vision -- the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction -- is for us more than a chapter in cultural history; it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are

drenched, we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is more than a search for identity; it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us; and how we can begin to see -- and therefore live -- afresh.<sup>16</sup>

By making some word substitutions in the foregoing passage, namely “Claude” for “woman,” “his” for “her,” “war” for “male-dominated society,” and “holistic” for “feminist,” we find the resultant definition of refashioning and its outcome to be what, in the final analysis, *One of Ours* is--a literary memorial to not only the dead, but the living searching for a balm to ease the pain of perceived alienation and abandonment, the hallmark of modern literature born in 1916.

In the most basic sense, *One of Ours*, in Cather’s own words, is a story that “took a little fellow from a little town, gave him an air and a swagger, a life like a movie-film, - and then a death like the rebel angels.”<sup>17</sup> But to reduce Cather’s novel, based upon the war experiences of her cousin G. P. Cather to the trite theme of youthful “idealism sacrificed on the pagan altar of war,”<sup>18</sup> is to give short shrift to the more encompassing manner in which the novel reflects how the majority of Americans, in looking back at the war, must construct various myths to make sense of the carnage of lost lives. While John Dos Passos would present a negative and disillusioning view of American servicemen in *Three Soldiers*, Cather desired to reverse that image and memorialize not only her cousin, but also all those young men who had died in some corner of a foreign field. Whereas one might see Dos Passos’ intent in *Three Soldiers* to deconstruct the myth of the soldier as the crucified Christ who must wander in the wilderness of the trenches before providing

salvation from the evils of the Satanic Hun, *One of Ours* revisions the cultural history of World War I as memorialization and commemoration.

The act of memorializing the war and those who served in it was most notably found in the formation of the American Legion in 1919, an organization whose sole purpose was to honor, celebrate and commemorate American participation in the Great War. Under its direction and pointed suggestion, the American Legion urged cities across America to dedicate their highways to various divisions of the Army and also construct statues and memorials to heroes, both to those with name recognition and those without. Although war memorials to the dead began to be erected in France within months of the Armistice, particularly in the Meuse-Argonne region by the American Battle Monuments Commission under the leadership of General Pershing, Americans stateside were slow to commemorate their dead in memorial cemeteries.

One of the first memorials of internment occurred in early 1921 in Bladen, Nebraska when the body of G. P. Cather, the model for the idealistic soldier Claude Wheeler in *One of Ours*, recently exhumed from a war cemetery near Chateau-Thierry, was laid to rest in the soil from which he had been formed. G. P. Cather, the first Nebraska officer killed in France, posthumously received the Distinguished Service Cross, in a burial ceremony orchestrated by the American Legion and attended by more than 2000 Nebraskans, as well as members of Cather's company. A granite memorial, which still stands in downtown Bladen, bears a bronze plaque in the likeness of Cather in uniform.

The American Battle Monuments Commission was instrumental in providing the means not only for G. P. Cather, but for hundreds of American soldiers to be reburied in American cemeteries stateside, which provided revisioning from over there to over here, and promoting a sense of cultural inclusiveness by bridging a gap between those who came home and those who seemingly did not. The work of the Commission symbolically ended in 1921 with the interment of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, and thus it would seem the fields of remembrance had been conclusively seeded.

But, if Americans in the 1920s, and even in the 1930s, were to look back at what had transpired in 1917 and 1918 and ultimately refuse to succumb to the self-destructiveness plaguing “the lost generation,” a new memorial celebrating a self-constructiveness in the face of seeming global and cultural annihilation had to be raised. *One of Ours* emerged in 1922 as not only a memorial to G. P. Cather as Claude Wheeler, but to America as it had been, and, in constructing such a memorial, renders an emotional and spiritual peace to the alienated and abandoned, thereby assimilating all into a unified and inclusive whole.

*One of Ours* arrived in bookstores on September 8, 1922 with mixed reviews. H. L. Mencken, a long-time Cather admirer, praised the first half of the novel that deals with Claude Wheeler’s life in Nebraska, but flatly declared the war section to be unrealistic. Drawing unfair and biased comparisons between the novel and John Dos Passos’ 1921 war novel, Mencken declared:

What spoils the story is simply that a year or so ago a young soldier named John Dos Passos printed a novel called *Three*

*Soldiers*. Until *Three Soldiers* is forgotten and fancy achieves the inevitable victory over fact, no war story can be written in the United States without challenging comparison with it - and no story that is less meticulously true will stand up to it. At one blast it disposed of oceans of romance and blather.<sup>19</sup>

Romance, as a literary term, generally involves a combination of adventure, arduous quest, thwarted love and ultimate triumph or disappointment. Often spurred on by the desire to attain the impossible dream or love and devotion prevailing against social, political or demonic odds, the romantic hero becomes associated with fanciful representations rather than realistic verisimilitude. Therefore, for Mencken's assessment of *Three Soldiers* as the supreme example of the truth of the American soldier's experience in World War I to be accurate, the novel can neither be fancy nor romance. However, by Dos Passos' own admission, it is both and, in truth, an example of the propaganda of disappointment and despair.

When *Three Soldiers* was released by George H. Doran Company in 1921, the majority of the reviews proclaimed the novel a success. A reviewer for the *Atlantic* disapproved of "the propaganda and the pages of barrack pettinesses" while Heywood Brown, in the *Bookman*, opined, "[*Three Soldiers*] represents deep convictions and impressions eloquently expressed." Coningsly Dawson offered a dissenting opinion in his review for the *New York Times Book Review* of October 2. "The book fails because of its unmanly intemperance both in language and in plot. The voice of righteousness is never once sounded; the only voice heard is the voice of complaint and petty recrimination."<sup>20</sup>

*Three Soldiers* was not only regarded as a vehicle of the propaganda of disappointment and despair so prevalent among the lost generation, but, as the first

successful novel to emerge from the war, it became the model for a new voice of veteran despair and the romantic trope of the weary hero in search of elusive virtue and truth. *Three Soldiers*, by Dos Passos' own admission when testifying before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1953, was born out of a fanciful rearrangement of the notion of what war is about and what it ultimately yields, as well as a romantic quest for change from the status quo.

I am a writer. I was born in the United States in 1896. My father was a well-known New York lawyer. I received a good education and graduated from Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass., in 1916. Filled with enthusiasm for the Allied cause, I volunteered for ambulance service with the French Army and, after the entry of the United States into World War I, I joined the American Army. After the War I felt a great sense of disappointment in the results achieved after so many sacrifices, a disappointment of which I wrote in a novel entitled *Three Soldiers*. Partly because of this disappointment, partly because of the youthful intellectual's desire for change for the sake of change, and partly because of its humanitarian pretensions, in the mid-1920's I became interested in the Soviet experiment. This interest led me to visit the Soviet Union in 1928.<sup>21</sup>

*Three Soldiers* was born in the fanciful mind of "a youthful intellectual's desire for change." Post-war disappointment welded to a yearning to reorder or invert the status quo gave birth to the propaganda or fancy of despair. Thus, Mencken's belief that Dos Passos' most celebrated war novel "disposed of oceans of romance and blather" is erroneous. *Three Soldiers*, like *One of Ours*, is romance and fancy and the propaganda of disappointment--a disappointment and despair experienced by those who, in trying to justify a propaganda of purpose and volunteerism, ultimately discover that the Red Sea of aggression parts only long enough to let the soldier go over to the war front, but then closes and envelopes those who must continue to live and work and remember on the

home front. But Cather pushes on where Dos Passos stops and informs her readership that the propaganda of disappointment, when welded to propaganda of purpose, yields a vision of acceptance of the past and guarded optimism for the future.

*One of Ours*, like *Three Soldiers*, is not so much a novel concerned with war as it is with the presence of various social crises that threaten the individual's existence. John Andrews, Dos Passos' sensitive protagonist, gains insight into his loss of individuality when he is in combat situations. War requires that he yield himself up to the demands of another entity that insists he become something he is not. Looking into a pool of water created by the incessant rain collecting in a shell crater, he sees into what the Army has made him.

Then he noticed his reflection in the puddle. He looked at it curiously. He could barely see the outlines of a stained grimacing mask, and the silhouette of the gun barrel slanting behind it. So this was what they had made of him.<sup>22</sup>

Immediately after obtaining this self-knowledge, he is wounded, and his anti-war and anti-military sentiments begin to crystallize.

By contrast, Claude Wheeler's sense of self-knowledge, an awareness of what he is and has become, is discovered not in the arena of battle, but on the home front, in the heart of the domestic landscape. The story of this too sensitive Nebraska farm boy, who dies in France at the age of twenty-five, is related by a third-person omniscient narrator who frequently slides into Claude's reflections on his life. Thus, we often see the world through these same reflections and perceptions. But we commit a grave error, as did Hemingway, if we suppose that Claude Wheeler's point of view is in essence Cather's. As Jean Schwind has pointed out, Cather often satirizes Claude's romanticism and

detaches herself from it, particularly in the last few pages of the novel.<sup>23</sup> Cather's narrator avers that Claude died in battle thankfully before encountering the same type of disillusionment Dos Passos' John Andrews or Ernest Hemingway's Frederick Henry had discovered. Claude dies "believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can ever be. And those were beautiful beliefs to die with. Perhaps it was as well to see that vision, and then to see no more."<sup>24</sup>

Cather desired to counter the negative and disillusioned view of American soldiers seen in *Three Soldiers* and *A Farewell to Arms* through not only an affirmation of the rhetoric justifying the American war experience, but also through a graphic and succinct exploration of "what happens when the rebel without a cause finally discovers one -- the wrong one -- and then becomes a mindless enthusiast and, paradoxically, the ultimate conformist."<sup>25</sup> Claude Wheeler, the 1917 American version of Rupert Brooke, is searching for purpose and meaning in a life which has hitherto been a series of unrelenting years of dreary loneliness and lack of any personal or social fulfillment. As Cather points out, her cousin, like Claude, "had been a sullen, discontented country boy [who] seemed to have found dignity and purpose in the trenches."<sup>26</sup> Like Brooke, Claude approaches the war as salvation, another Lancelot in search of a Holy Grail, an illusionary ideal in which he could find peace.

Just as Mary Borden's *The Forbidden Zone* reveals how war creates an inversion of the normal order of things and specifically how nature becomes that which is to be feared and avoided, the first half of *One of Ours* presents the naturalistic, almost Garden of Eden domestic landscape of Nebraska as one in which one would assume Claude to be



idyllically peaceful and content. Yet, the landscape is oppressive, and what makes it so very beautiful is exactly what renders it fearful.

As the novel unfolds, Claude's ineffectualness and purposelessness is reflected in the landscape. During an early snowstorm that threatens the safety of the livestock, Claude muses, "There was something beautiful about the submissive way in which the country met winter. It made one contented, sad too."<sup>27</sup> He meets his fate of seeming ineffectualness and loss of any control over his destiny with a strange sense of peaceful acceptance. His resignation comes from an inner realization that all his hopes and ambitions, like the Nebraska landscape from which he was fashioned, will never be altered or diverted from the path upon which some invisible hand has placed them. Claude sees in the landscape a reflection of himself and the belief that he, like it, holds promise, even in the face of skepticism, if he could till deep enough or long enough to discover it.

The neighbors liked Claude, but they laughed at him, and said it was a good thing his father was well fixed. Claude was aware that his energy, instead of accomplishing something, was spent in resisting unalterable conditions, and in unavailing efforts to subdue his own nature. When he thought he had at last got himself in hand, a moment would undo the work of days; in a flash he would be transformed from a wooden post into a living boy. He would spring to his feet, turn over quickly in bed, or stop short in his walk because the old belief flashed up in him with an intense kind of hope, an intense kind of pain, - the conviction that there was something splendid about life, if he could but find it!<sup>28</sup>

The myth of a comforting safe Midwestern landscape, idyllic and Edenic, is exploded in the manner in which Cather, like Borden, makes the natural the oppressive, and the slaughter of war the peaceful. Claude's home front is one of continual oppression,

disappointment and failure. At his mother's insistence, he attends a Bible college in Lincoln, but at the end of his sophomore year, his father requires that Claude drop out so that he can manage the family farm in Nebraska while his father and younger brother go to Denver to oversee a newly acquired cattle ranch. Claude resents being forced to leave his friends and professors in Lincoln under whose guidance he has developed a hunger for the arts and humanities. His growing unhappiness, resentment and feelings of having no control over the course of his life reach their apex with his marriage to Enid Royce, the quintessentially frigid, anti-saloon league zealot who yearns to be a missionary.

Claude feels marriage will restore his soul. But ultimately, the paradise of the home front becomes lost as he realizes that the marriage he felt would be salvation will only be empty and unfulfilling.

Everything would be all right when they were married, Claude told himself. He believed in the transforming power of marriage, as his mother believed in the miraculous effects of conversion. Marriage reduced all women to a common denominator; changed a cool, self-satisfied girl into a loving and generous one. It was quite right that Enid should be unconscious now of everything that she was to be when she was his wife. He told himself he wouldn't want it otherwise. But he was lonely, all the same.<sup>29</sup>

On their wedding night, Enid claims illness and locks Claude out of their stateroom on the Denver Express. She, like Eve, becomes the destructive element and is the catalyst for Claude leaving Eden, not because of knowledge gained, but because of knowledge never realized.

Everything about a man's embrace was distasteful to Enid; something inflicted upon women, like the pain of childbirth - for Eve's transgression perhaps. Other men than he must have been disappointed, and he wondered how they bore it through a

lifetime. Claude had been a well-behaved boy because he was an idealist; he had looked forward to being wonderfully happy in love, and to deserving his happiness. He had never dreamed that it might be otherwise.<sup>30</sup>

Claude's view of Enid is but a reflection of his own sleep. Like Brooke, who praises war as that which wakes us from the sleep of complacency, home front desertion and war front enlistment will awaken within Claude a sense of purpose.

Ironically, the wasteland of France, the bowels of the trenches, becomes the possibility of regaining paradise. Claude views the war as an escape route from the dreary, disappointing and loveless life on the home front of Nebraska. Cather successfully juxtaposes an Edenic Midwest against a war-torn France, upending our accustomed responses in much the same manner as Mary Borden. War in France comes to Nebraska, not as the locus of something evil as Mrs. Wheeler had once believed, but now, for Claude, enticing, beckoning, redeeming.

His mother, he knew, had always thought of Paris as the wickedest of cities, the capital of a frivolous, wine-drinking, Catholic people, who were responsible for the massacre of St. Bartholomew and for the grinning atheist, Voltaire. For the last two weeks, ever since the French began to fall back in Lorraine, he had noticed with amusement her growing solicitude for Paris.

It was curious, he reflected, lying wide awake in the dark: four days ago the seat of government had been moved to Bordeaux, - with the effect that Paris seemed suddenly to have become the capital, not of France but of the world! He knew he was not the only farmer boy who wished himself tonight beside the Marne. There was nothing on earth he would so gladly be as an atom in that wall of flesh and blood that rose and melted and rose again before the city which had meant so much through all the centuries - but had never meant so much before. Its name had come to have the purity of an abstract idea.<sup>31</sup>

For Claude, “the purity of an abstract idea,” what Hemingway had found as obscene in the abstractions of *honor*, *glory* and *courage*, which are found in war-torn France, not Edenic Nebraska, gives an emotional and spiritual peace. It is in the natural arena, the home front landscape, where Claude Wheeler experiences the alienation and fragmentation born of being a part of a community whose values he cannot share, an aborted college education not of his own choosing, and a marriage that perhaps is never consummated. Thus the boundaries between home front and war front become merged as the customary and commonly accepted points of view of where one finds peace and where one finds alienation are assimilated into a single, conclusive point of view. As Claude embarks for France, his mother puts up a map of France on the kitchen wall, not to create a sense of distancing otherness, but to insist upon how France and Nebraska, military and domestic, merge into one continuous representation of all human desire, longing, suffering. Cather’s message is clear. Whether one is contemplating an early morning sky lit up by artillery in France or a first snow covering the fields of Nebraska, any and all varying human emotions are welded into the single point of view that negates the distance between home and war is negated.

The second half of *One of Ours* juxtaposes Claude’s romantic notions of war in France with the effects of war upon women and the home front. Although Stanley Cooperman dismisses Cather’s treatment of this tension as nothing more than a home front novel that celebrates, rather than honestly and intellectually depicts, what was sheer slaughter,<sup>32</sup> it is, as Sharon O’Brien has suggested

neither the chest-thumping Kiplingesque celebration of militarism and patriarch that a Willa Cather might have written

nor the sentimental, stereotypic hymn to the American fighting man that her reviewers attributed to the “lady” author’s feminine limitations. It is a complex text filled with seemingly contradictory and anomalous elements; like many novels by women writers, it contains an encoded narrative that is far more interesting and potentially subversive than the surface plot.<sup>33</sup>

What Cather does manage to do in the second part of *One of Ours*, and quite successfully so, is to assimilate male and female points of view regarding war, juxtaposed against an experience of alienation and purpose, into a single, inclusive point of view. This marriage of different viewpoints into an inclusive whole, a return to normalcy but with a forward looking hopefulness tempered by a knowing sense of disillusionment, makes *One of Ours*, unlike *Three Soldiers* or *A Farewell to Arms*, which wholly fail in providing a final hint of possible salvation for the American soldier or the society from which he was fashioned, the very essence of fourth stage war propaganda.

Book Four, the first half of the true war section, relates Claude’s experiences as he sails from New York to France aboard the *Anchises*, “an old English liner pulled off the Australian trade that could only carry twenty-five hundred men.” As a soldier in the American Expeditionary Forces, Claude finds a sense of belonging and oneness with his comrades and unabashedly wonders what change had been wrought that made the individual so common, but the collective extraordinary.

Two years ago he had seemed a fellow for whom life was over; driven into the ground like a post, or like those Chinese criminals who are planted upright in the earth, with only their heads left out for birds to peck at and insects to sting. All his comrades had been tucked away in prairie towns, with their little jobs and their little plans. Yet here they were, attended by unknown ships called in from the four quarters of the earth. How had they come to be worth the watchfulness and devotion of so many men and machines, this extravagant consumption of

fuel and energy? Taken one by one, they were ordinary fellows like himself. Yet here they were. And in this massing and movement of men there was nothing mean or common; he was sure of that. It was, from first to last, unforeseen, almost incredible.

As Claude finds a sense of purpose, a *raison d'être* in the collective spirit, the disillusionment and sense of alienation found on the home front are dispelled as an emotional and spiritual peace is found in the homeosocial domain of the military.

Here on the *Anchises* he seemed to begin where childhood had left off. The ugly hiatus between had closed up. Years of his life were plotted out in the fog. This fog which had been at first depressing had become a shelter; a tent moving through space, hiding one from all that had been before, giving one a chance to correct one's ideas about life and to plan the future.<sup>35</sup>

The sense of the military, of war, as protective tent, maternal in its ability to protect one from all that had come before, in essence one's history, gives Claude the liberating belief that now he can correct past beliefs and behaviors and go forward. His "return to normalcy" is found in the marriage of purpose and idealism to a forward-looking sense of optimistic rejuvenation. Thus, Claude becomes the living essence of the propaganda of assimilation. Welding fragmentation and disillusionment to purpose and spiritual peace yields a unified present that shields one from the "ugly hiatus" of the past and promises a reformed future.

Claude's ultimate sense of purpose and value, coupled with the rejuvenating freedom of a future totally divorced from any fatalistic hopelessness of the past, is found in the typically feminine sphere of care and nurture. When a flu epidemic breaks out on the troopship, Claude assumes the role of the doctor's assistant. He becomes a devoted nurse, demonstrating the nurturing qualities generally ascribed to women in the war front.

But Claude's need and ability to nurture and protect was not born in the present, but came to life in that alienated past. While his father and younger brother desired to amass power and wealth through the empire building of land ownership, Claude expressed a desire to protect and nurture the home front environment. He finds no pleasure in clearing the land of trees and regards his father's delight in cutting down a cherry tree as something abhorrent. When a blizzard causes the barn roof to collapse and twelve pigs suffocate in the mounting snow, Claude aches from the loss "because they had been left in his charge; but for the loss in money about which mother was grieved, he didn't seem to care."<sup>36</sup>

In nursing his fellow soldiers aboard the *Anchises*, Claude finds a sense of community and belonging that he never knew in Nebraska. As he comforts a desperately ill young soldier who suffers as much from homesickness as the viral infection, and encourages his men to maintain a sense of honor and decorum even when confronted with pain and suffering, he finds the emotional and spiritual peace hitherto absent. It is precisely this sense of unity and completeness that creates an overwhelmingly maternalistic desire to protect his men at all costs. Like the mother hen who will feign injury to distract the predator from her offspring, Claude's death in the parapet at Boar's Snout was not an act of bravery, but rather a desire to entice the enemy to fire on him rather than on the men under his command.

While cynical critics have felt the manner of his death creates an improbable veil of martyrdom, Cather's creation of the nurturing male, willing to sacrifice himself for an ideal, is a construction later to be adopted by Ernest Hemingway and found in the war-affected characters of Frederick Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* and Jake Barnes in *The Sun*

*Also Rises*. The Hemingway hero is a man of action, not ideal musing; a man of sensual living, not fasting; and ultimately a man of courage, conviction and, although possessing a respect or fear of death, not afraid of dying. It is only when the hero tests his courage and the strength of his convictions by encountering danger that he will ultimately realize his own sense of being and his depth of character. But the Hemingway hero in war, so akin to that of Claude Wheeler, does not appear until well after the publication of *One of Ours* and, although Hemingway had reviled the final battle scene in which Claude was killed, Claude's nurturing and protective actions, decidedly feminine in nature and scope, are at the very heart of the Hemingway code of conduct.

In 1916, Amy Lowell wrote to a friend, "War is foreign to our instincts, completely alien to our ideals and desires. I regard this war as a social illness."<sup>37</sup> Implicit in Lowell's definition is the contention that war, like an illness, feeds upon the body, which it infects. In her poem "In the Stadium," Lowell speaks of those bodies of mobilized Harvard students who the speaker sees as being overcome by the burgeoning malignancy.

The young bodies of boys  
Bulwarked in front of us  
The white bodies of young men  
Heaped like sandbags  
Against the German guns.

This is war:  
Boys flung into a breach  
Like shoveled earth.

For Lowell, the price of glory, the cost of being a woman in a world of war, is the reduction of a nation's best and brightest young men to sandbags, as Borden reduced them



to indeterminable shapes in a foreign plane. While Lowell defines war in terms of what it takes away, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson contends that war yields empowerment to men by death and leaves those on the home front devoid of such power, Cather defines war as that which “took a little fellow from a little town, gave him an air and a swagger, a life like a movie-film, -- and then a death like the rebel angels.”<sup>38</sup>

Many are the critics who suggest that Claude’s single-minded vision of war as what provides meaning and purpose to an otherwise empty existence is, in truth, the voice of Cather. Those who subscribe to this deduction have failed to read carefully and completely the epilogue. In the final three pages of the novel, Cather undercuts what appears to have been a romantic and noble cause to one that exacts such waste and brutality that disillusionment is all that remains for the survivor. Claude is saved from that disillusionment, “believing his own country better than it is, and France better than any country can ever be. And those were beautiful beliefs to die with. Perhaps it was well to see that vision, and then to see no more.”<sup>39</sup>

But Claude’s beliefs have been forged by what he experienced in France, on the war front where he finds a sense of belonging, not in the conventional home front traditional family, but in the homosocially constructed family, the military. D. A. Boxwell avers, “What Cather is elaborating is the extent to which young men seek to participate in war precisely because combat is the fullest realization of the tantalizing glimpses of perfect homosociality that civilian life also affords.”<sup>40</sup> However, it is precisely feminine, not homological, forces that spur Claude to enlist: his failed and unconsummated marriage to Enid and his mother’s feeling that “we must stand

somewhere, morally [and] if we agree to withdraw aid, where are we?”<sup>41</sup> Claude does not seek refuge in the army,<sup>42</sup> as Boxwell contends, but rather in that sphere where he may reap “the harvest of all that has been planted.”<sup>43</sup> What shall be reaped is not the familiar and commonplace of being trapped within the confines of realism, but the dreamlike and illusionary vision of escape into a world of purpose, care and sacrifice for an idyllic rather than economic end.

But what also has been planted is jealousy and envy. When his army buddy George Gerhardt plays the violin for the French family that has given Claude a sense of inclusion his own family never did, he is overcome with jealous bitterness.

What would it mean to be able to do anything as well as that, to have a hand capable of delicacy and precision and power? If he had been taught to do anything at all, he would not be sitting here tonight a wooden thing amongst living people. He felt that a man might have been made of him, but nobody had taken the trouble to do it; tongue-tied, foot-tied, hand-tied. If one were born into this world like a bear cub or a bull calf, one could only paw and upset things, break and destroy, all one's life.<sup>44</sup>

Claude's envy and setting of blame upon the family are not, as Sharon O'Brien has opined, a “call[ing] of attention to the consequences (and perhaps the causes) of male powerlessness and victimization in the novel,”<sup>45</sup> but rather the realization of a spiritually devoid and disinherited young man who comes to see that in order to find himself, he must escape mediocrity and, like the Parsifal character in what one might regard as a Midwestern American *The Waste Land*, find a sense of fulfillment in an increasingly commercialized society. The bear cub or bull calf, classic icons of the American economy and commercialism, can only destroy or tear down when born into the sophisticated artistic world Claude finds in Europe. It is only when he, the “cloddish” and roughneck

American, finds himself in the midst of a rich European civilization that he feels he, unlike George, had been robbed of a tradition-filled heritage. The miracle of war gives Claude all that he has been missing in life.

Three years ago he used to sit moping by the windmill because he didn't see how a Nebraska farmer boy had any "call," or indeed, any way to throw himself into the struggle in France. He used enviously to read about Alan Seeger and those fortunate American boys who had a right to fight for a civilization they knew.

But the miracle had happened; a miracle so wide in its amplitude that the Wheelers -- all the Wheelers -- and the roughnecks and the low brows were caught up in it. Yes, it was the roughnecks' own miracle, all this; it was their golden chance. He was in on it, and nothing could hinder or discourage him unless he were put over the side himself, which was only a way of joking, for that was a possibility he never seriously considered. The feeling of purpose, of fateful purpose, was strong in his heart.<sup>46</sup>

For Claude Wheeler, the Holy Grail, the lost paradise, exists in the European battlefield where to die is not only an awfully big adventure, but also an elevated and noble enterprise. Claude dies not in some ignominious fashion, but at the height of that place of glorious transformation where childhood idealism, "something he imagined long ago," is fused to the reality that the moment and circumstance of one's death become the purpose of life. Claude dies possessing a vitality and peace life could not afford. "The blood dripped down his coat, but he felt no weakness. He felt only one thing; that he commanded wonderful men. When David came up with the supports he might find them dead, but he would find them all there."<sup>47</sup>

One wonders what would have happened had Claude Wheeler survived the war and returned to the plains of Nebraska. In the epilogue, Cather narrates what happened to those who came home.

One by one the heroes of that war, the men of dazzling soldiership, leave prematurely the world they have come back to. Airmen whose deeds were tales of wonder, officers whose names made the blood of youth beat faster, survivors of incredible dangers, - one by one they quietly die by their own hand. Some do it in obscure lodging houses, some in their office, where they seemed to be carrying on their business like other men. Some slip over a vessel's side and disappear into the sea.<sup>48</sup>

It is for Claude Wheeler, not Willa Cather, that war and death by war emerge as the glories of life. Although Sharon O'Brien believes that Cather, or more pointedly what she terms "Cather's combat envy," feels that "something wonderful' had happened to men in battle [which she tries] to possess vicariously, through the act of writing,"<sup>49</sup> the final pages of *One of Ours* present war as an amalgamation or welding of disillusionment and purpose, suffering and salvation, and hope found and lost. For every Claude Wheeler who found purpose and direction in the bloody battles of the Meuse-Argonne, Chateau Thierry or Belleau Wood, another Claude Wheeler came home to a real or imagined equally bloody battle on the home front of desolation and devaluation of human life.

Ultimately, *One of Ours* is a novel that reflects both the narrator's and protagonist's awareness of war as agency for both self-realization and physical and psychological desecration. Essentially more a lost generation novel than *Three Soldiers*, *A Farewell to Arms* or *The Sun Also Rises*, *One of Ours* is a final backward glance of a war propaganda that, in its final stages, juxtaposed emotional and spiritual peace against

alienation and disillusionment in order to create one simple, unitarian, universal belief that war is neither sacred nor safe or dispassionate. In the end, it is that which in its ultimate horrible suffering still retains the remnants of a glorious calling that could not endure. Claude Wheeler is safe. He is not as “those slayers [who] were all so like him; they were the ones who hoped extravagantly, who in order to do what they did had to hope extravagantly, and to believe passionately. And they found they had hoped and believed too much.”<sup>50</sup> Hoping and believing too much, yet still believing passionately that we had to believe as we did in order to do as we have done is the ultimate objective of war propaganda.

As the bells of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City pealed on November 11, 1918, Willa Cather and Dalton Trumbo, within a block’s distance of one another, celebrated the declaration of the Armistice. This would be the closest they would come physically, but not literally. In 1939, with the publication of *Johnny Got His Gun*, the story of a World War I soldier reduced to a basket case in a foreign military hospital, Trumbo created a mind without a body, a voice without a mouth, a truly fragmented man without any hope of ultimate spiritual or emotional peace. Joe Bonham, a living shell possessing no eyes, legs, arms, face, is the living dead of war, and an embarrassment to all who wished not to be reminded of the slaughter of six thousand American boys each week in the Meuse-Argonne or the entrapment at Belleau Wood where men fell in line like broken dominoes. In creating Joe Bonham, or rather wheeling him onto center stage before us, and then telling this story from his point of view, Trumbo desires to trouble us in much the same way as William Faulkner unnerves us in his use of the mind of the idiot

Benjy as the point of view for *The Sound and the Fury*. But Bonham is no idiot. In his unrelenting attempts to communicate the consciousness within him, Trumbo's soldier is Cather's Claude Wheeler come back. His is no longer a rhetoric of war as purpose or war as the ultimate vehicle of disillusionment or alienation.

War is not, as Hemingway said, a game of old men played by young men, supervised by generals who die in bed. War is the elemental state of being through which every generation must pass. Whether we approach it with the vision of war as the fulfillment of our hopes and dreams or a divine calling to keep the world safe for the globalization of a single political ideology, we want war either to kill cleanly or not even to be initiated. But when the killing fields are haphazard and our shells create half men who survive against all odds and are nasty reminders of our most aggressive or vengeful natures, we are embarrassed. Whether alienated or fragmented, emotionally or spiritually peaceful in the rightness of our cause, the postwar propaganda of assimilating all divergent points of view into one single unifying one has as its end a single question. When Joe Bonham, after years of relentlessly tapping his head against his pillow, finally makes himself understood, a finger taps against his chest asking, "What do you want?"

When war is over, and the artillery is silent and the long and arduous job of clearing the fields of dismembered body parts begins, whether we have been embarrassed or thrilled by all the Claude Wheelers and Joe Bonhams, their ghosts will ask, "What did you want?" And what did we want? Or what do we still want? A return to some nebulous sense of normalcy? Cather and Trumbo show us that no matter what our ideologies are or where our state of being may place us, all we can do is react to a rhetoric

that is a logic unto itself. While propaganda seeks to mold and direct the belief system of the individual, its ultimate goal, like that of Claude Wheeler and Joe Bonham, is to assimilate us all into a homogenous condensed whole.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Conder, *A Few Pages from the Diary of an Ambulance Driver* (New York: Dutton, 1918), p. viii.

<sup>5</sup> Hemingway, p 186.

<sup>6</sup> Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> Arlen J. Hansen, *Gentlemen Volunteers* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), pp. 159-60.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *Selected Letters 1917-1961* Carlos Baker, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Hansen, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup> Carlyle H. Holt, "The Inspector's Letter Box," in *Friends of France: The Field Service of the American Ambulance Described by its Members* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), pp. 173-74.

<sup>12</sup> W. Kerr Rumsford, "An American Ambulancier at Verdun," in *The World's Work*, 33 (December 1916), p. 186.

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Hemingway, "A Natural History of the Dead" *The Short Stories* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), pp. 441-442.

<sup>14</sup> Edmund Wilson, *The Shores of Light* (New York: Straus and Giloux, 1995), p. 118.

<sup>15</sup> The total number of Americans killed in World War I was 114,000. Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 337.

<sup>16</sup> Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" *College English* 34 (1972), 18.

<sup>17</sup> Willa Cather, *One of Ours* (New York: Random House (Vintage Classics Edition), 1991), p. 35.

<sup>18</sup> James Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 330.

<sup>19</sup> H. L. Mencken, *Smart Set* (Oct. 1922), pp. 140-42.

<sup>20</sup> John Dos Passos, *The Fourteenth Chronicle: Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos* Townsend Ludington, ed. (Boston: Gambit Incorporated, 1973), p. 335.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 600.

<sup>22</sup> Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers*, p. 193.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Schwind, "The 'Beautiful' War in *One of Ours*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 30 (1984), p. 68.

<sup>24</sup> Cather, p. 370.

<sup>25</sup> Steven Trout, "Willa Cather's *One of Ours* and the Iconography of Remembrance" *Cather Studies* 4, 1999, 191.

<sup>26</sup> D. A. Boxwell, "In Formation: Male Homosocial Desire in Willa Cather's *One of Ours*." *Eroticism and Containment: Notes from the Flood Plain* Eds. Carol Siegel and Ann Kibbey. (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 198.

<sup>27</sup> Cather, p. 71.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.



<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>32</sup> Stanley Cooperman, *World War I and the American Novel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p. 130.

<sup>33</sup> Sharon O'Brien, "Combat Envy and Survivor Guilt: Willa Cather's 'Manly Battle Yarn.'" *Arms and the Woman: War, Gender, and Literary Representation* Eds. Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Munich Auslander, and Susan Merrill Squier. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 188.

<sup>34</sup> Cather, pp. 230-231.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>37</sup> Sam Foster Damon, *Amy Lowell: A Chronicle with Extracts from Her Correspondence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935), p. 420.

<sup>38</sup> Cather, p. 303.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>40</sup> Boxwell, pp. 293-94.

<sup>41</sup> Cather, p. 188.

<sup>42</sup> Boxwell, p. 298.

<sup>43</sup> Cather, p. 187.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>45</sup> O'Brien, p. 193.

<sup>46</sup> Cather, pp. 252-53.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>49</sup> O'Brien, p. 192.

<sup>50</sup> Cather, p. 370.

### Conclusion

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo,  
Shovel them under and let me work--  
I am the grass: I cover all.  
And pile them high at Gettysburg  
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.  
Shovel them under and let me work.  
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:  
What place is this?  
Where are we now?  
I am the grass.  
Let me work.  
--Carl Sandburg, "Grass"

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson appeared before Congress seeking a Declaration of War against Germany, insisting that the world must be made safe for democracy. Wilson's depiction of America as a "champion of the rights of mankind" that would act unselfishly in protecting and securing those rights was an ideology that could not endure without an effective large-scale propaganda machine. Whereas Rupert Brooke and Dorothy Canfield Fisher had been successful in mustering support for the war on the home front, Wilson's machine would seek support on all fronts. Towards that end, the Committee on Public Information, overseen by George Creel, was established as the first governmental agency designed solely to manipulate public opinion.

During its reign, the Creel Committee published seventy-five million books and pamphlets and mobilized thousands of volunteers. The most effective and widely visible volunteers were the "four minute men," those who delivered four-minute pro-war messages in theatres during the changing of film reels. As America's first spin doctors, these volunteers endeavored to put a positive gloss on the war while promoting a spirit of volunteerism patterned after England's white feather campaign.

However, Britain's catastrophic error in presenting to the public a war propaganda movie depicting the full experience of the first day of the Battle of the Somme was not wasted on the Creel Commission. From the time the United States Senate voted in favor of entering the war on April 6, 1917, the Commission prohibited the public dissemination or publication of any photographs or works of art that depicted mutilated or dead American soldiers. Although Mary Borden had depicted maimed soldiers as loaves of bread or mewling kittens, other American writers stateside were barred from the writing of graphic accounts of maimed or killed soldiers, depicted as actual men. Until Willa Cather's *One of Ours*, the dead American soldier was always presented or alluded to as something other than a man.

As thousands of young American men were persuaded to go "over there," the Creel Committee again looked to the British experience and established the American Protective League, America's answer to the white feather girls. Whereas British women sought only to humiliate slackers or war objectors by branding them with a white feather, the American Protective League carried out more than forty thousand citizen arrests of those whom they deemed to be subversive pacifists. The suspected hotbed of subversion was believed to exist within American colleges and universities and thus any professor or instructor who questioned the war effort or showed any sympathy or fairness towards Germans was fired.

This mass fervor of blind patriotism reached its climax in June 1917 when the Espionage Act was passed, which to this day has never been repealed. The Act provided: "Whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully cause or attempt to cause

insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty in the military or naval forces of the United States, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment.”<sup>1</sup> On May 16, 1918, the Act was amended to include additional provisions, specifically stating:

When the United States is at war whoever shall willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States, or the Constitution of the United States, or the uniform of the Army or Navy of the United States, or any language intended to bring the form of government . . . or the Constitution . . . or the military or naval forces . . . or the flag . . . of the United States into contempt, scorn, contumely, or disrepute . . . or shall willfully urge, incite, or advocate any curtailment of production in this country of any thing or things necessary or essential to the prosecution of the war . . . and whoever shall willfully advocate, teach, defend or suggest the doing of any of the acts or things in this section enumerated and whoever shall by word or act support or favor the cause of any country with which the United States is at war or by word or act oppose the cause of the United States therein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both.<sup>2</sup>

The wide net cast by the Act laid the groundwork then and now for civil liberties and Constitutional rights to be violated. Among the most celebrated violations was the imprisonment of Eugene Debs who, in June 1918, publicly voiced his opinions of the war to members of the Socialist Party. Debs’ much publicized statement to the court, often quoted by demonstrators in the 1960’s protesting American involvement in the Vietnam War, hastened his three-year prison sentence.

Your honor, years ago, I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a

criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison,  
I am not free.<sup>3</sup>

Eugene Debs was not the only American who would be incarcerated for expressing opposition to America's entry into World War I. In 1917, Rose Pastor Stokes, a Russian immigrant and member of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, whose ranks included Upton Sinclair, Jack London and Clarence Darrow, stating in a letter to the Kansas City Star that "no government which is for the profiteers can also be for the people, and I am for the people while the government is for the profiteers,"<sup>4</sup> Stokes was charged with violating the Espionage Act and sentenced to ten years in prison.

Kate Richards, a native Nebraskan who joined the Socialist Party of America in 1901, was Chairperson of the Committee on War and Militarism when the United States entered the war in 1917. In July 1917, Richards, while on tour in North Dakota, delivered an anti-war speech asserting that the War was one of competing imperialistic political systems and that the United States, now as part of the Allied forces, was condoning imperialism and oppression. Sentencing her to five years in prison, the judge said, "This is a nation of free speech; but this is a time for sacrifice, when mothers are sacrificing their sons. Is it too much to ask that for the time being men shall suppress any desire which they may have to utter words which may tend to weaken the spirit, or destroy the faith or confidence of the people?"<sup>5</sup> The union of home front sacrifice to battlefield success reflects the second stage propaganda advanced by Dorothy Canfield Fisher; however, it is noteworthy that the rhetoric of not only the Act, but judicial review, remains squarely within the paternal realm even when applied to feminine discourse.

Richards became a prolific writer while in prison, publishing *Kate O'Hare's Prison Letters* in 1919 and *In Prison* the following year. In response to nationwide campaigns demanding her release, Calvin Coolidge commuted her sentence to time served in 1922. Following her release, O'Hare and her husband, Francis O'Hare, moved to Leesville, Louisiana where she became an activist in local and national prison reform. In 1928, O'Hare married Charles Cunningham and moved to San Francisco where, as Assistant Director of the California Department of Penology, she championed the Constitutional rights of the incarcerated.

On June 6, 2002, President George W. Bush addressed a nation still grieving over the loss of thousands of lives in the wake of attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001. His opening statements announced that the United States had declared war against terrorism and that "freedom and fear are at war--and freedom is winning." Bush's closing statements, designed to create support for permanently establishing the Department of Homeland Security as a Cabinet-level agency, could very well have been spoken by Wilson in 1917.

History has called our nation into action. History has placed a great challenge before us: Will America--with our unique position and power--blink in the face of terror, or will we lead to a freer, more civilized world? There's only one answer: This great country will lead the world to safety, security, peace and freedom.<sup>6</sup>

The manner in which President Bush integrated safety and security with home into one single entity, which in his remarks at the signing of H.R. 5005, The Homeland Security Act of 2002, he endowed with sweeping powers to do those things necessary for "protecting our neighborhoods and borders and waters and skies from terrorists,"<sup>7</sup> neatly

ties together the belief that safety and home are synonymous--a belief espoused by Rupert Brooke in his war sonnets of 1914 and Dorothy Canfield Fisher in her sketches of the domestic war front of France and Belgium. Indeed, in all four stages of propaganda--purpose, volunteerism, questioning and reconciliation--the concepts of home, and war fought for the protection and safety of home, are paramount. Propaganda in 1914 and 2003 has as its main thrust the ideal of war as the chivalrous myth of pure young men going off willingly and innocently to protect the homeland against invasion by an alien beast. Home becomes synonymous with the domestic, the female domain, and defense of the homeland reasserts gender distinctions previously blurred.

In her study of militarism in women's writings from 1914 to 1964, Claire M. Tylee points out that Roland Barthes "has demonstrated how national myths act as cultural alibis. They disguise injustice and responsibility."<sup>8</sup> War propaganda, in all four stages, becomes effective because of the manner in which it uses the alibi that we must protect the home at all costs to support the national myth that killing the adversary, the one whose religious and ideological difference is seen as potentially evil, is not only acceptable, but sanctioned by a God our leaders call upon to bless us to the exclusion of others. Killing to protect one's own self, home or women from the alien other becomes necessary, justifiable, expected.

We tell ourselves today, as we did in 1917, that our involvement in war is not to serve any selfish aim or desire for conquest, but to protect the home, and we believe in the emotional appeals to myths of an evil beast on the loose that seeks only to destroy us and all we hold dear. Propaganda then and now builds upon our desire to protect the

rights of mankind, but only when that entity is a part of our domestic landscape. As George Bush stated on November 25, 2002, our actions are “to defend the United States and protect our citizens, our home and homeland.”<sup>9</sup> But what is a home? Is it a political entity or a domestic landscape composed of separate entities somehow transformed into a consolidated and unified whole?

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, William Faulkner asserted:

The young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.<sup>10</sup>

The war propaganda writings of Rupert Brooke, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Mary Borden, Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Willa Cather epitomize Faulkner’s definition of what “is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat” in the manner in which a sense of compassion and nurture, intensely characteristic of the domestic, permeates their language of war. But, if ultimately their voices find no lasting home, no place of security and protection, no permanent refuge for the heart in conflict with itself, Faulkner’s belief in the endurance and immortality of the man of compassion and sacrifice is negated. To find the true essence of home, that place where the language of war merges with the language of peace, the place where the battlefield becomes the home front, one may again look to Faulkner for the key.

Home is not merely four walls -- a house, a yard on a particular street with a number on the gate. It can be a rented room or an apartment -- any four walls which house



a marriage or a career or both the marriage and career at once. But it must be all the rooms or apartments; all the houses on that street and all the streets in that association of streets until they become a whole, an integer, or people have the same aspirations and hopes and problems and duties. The simple things - security and freedom and peace - are not only possible, not only can and must be, but they shall be. Home: not where *I* live, or *it* lives, but where *we* live.<sup>11</sup> (Emphasis in original).

The propaganda of homeland security, peace for the home front by aggression on the war front, cannot succeed until we define home as Faulkner has. The writings of Brooke, Fisher, Borden, Dunbar-Nelson and Cather wind through the four stages of war propaganda by venturing forth from the domestic home front to the war front and then into the greater community where the boundaries that arbitrarily define each domain become blurred. These writers, and the sense of domestic and military landscapes they offer, reside not in a specific homeland. Rather, they live within that association of streets --what Faulkner calls “home”--that reflects the history of all mankind’s longing for finding that sense of peace and belonging which comes from acting upon personal conviction and moral purpose.

The four stages of war propaganda ultimately foster not a language of war, but of peace, transcendence, and commitment to moral purpose even when one’s convictions place one outside the sphere of understanding, acceptance, popularity and endurance. In coming to know the peace of an inner self no longer fragmented, or tortured by a sense of homelessness and disenfranchisement, Rupert Brooke, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Mary Borden, Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Willa Cather validate not only themselves as Great War writers, but also the greater community of all of us who seek that association of

interconnected streets that leads to a mutual home. Although the streets these artists, the soldiers and the civilians they wrote about were often heavily cratered and carved out of mud and blood, they guided them, and hopefully those of us regrettably destined to repeat it once again, to a destination “worth the agony and the sweat” of “the noise and the glory of battles and victories” that is war.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Statutes at Large of the United States of America, Volume XL, Part 1 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), p. 217.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Eugene V. Debs, *Walls and Bars*. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1927), p. 119.

<sup>4</sup>Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), p. 423.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>“Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation, June 6, 2002 [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020606-8.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020606-8.html)

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>Claire M. Tylee. *The Great War and Women’s Consciousness* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990), p. 254.

<sup>9</sup>“Remarks by the President at the Signing of H.R. 5005 the Homeland Security Act of 2002, November 25, 2002 [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/22/rprint](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/22/rprint).

<sup>10</sup>William Faulkner, *Essays, Speeches and Public Letters*, James B. Meriwether, ed. (London: Chatto & Winders, 1967), pp. 119-120.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 141-42.

## Bibliography

- Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1958.
- Alltheide, David L. and John M. Johnson. *Bureaucratic Propaganda*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980.
- The Annals*. Vol. LXI, 4010, September 1915.
- Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. Ed. Samuel Lipman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- Badsey, Stephen. "The Great War Since The Great War." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22:1, March 2002.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.
- The Battery Book - A History of Battery "A" 306 F. A.* New York: DeVinne Press, 1921.
- Belloc, Hilaire. *The Four Men*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1912.
- Bergonzi, Bernard. *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War*. London: Constable and Co., 1965.
- Bittman, Ladislav. *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation*. Washington, D.C.: Pergamon Brasey, 1985.
- Blanton, Joshua E. "Men in the Making." *Southern Workman* 48, January 1996.
- Boothe, Allyson. *Postcards from the Trenches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Borden, Mary. *The Forbidden Zone*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1929.
- Boxwell, D. A. "In Formation: Male Homosocial Desire in Willa Cather's *One of Ours*." *Eroticism and Containment: Notes from the Flood Plain*. Eds. Carol Siegel and Ann Kibbey. New York: New York University Press, 1994.
- Breuer, William B. *War and American Women: Heroism, Deeds, and Controversy*. Westport (CT): Praeger Publishers, 1997.

- Brigham, Carl C. *A Study of American Intelligence*. Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1923.
- Brooke, Rupert. *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke*. New York: John Lane Company, 1915.
- Brooke, Rupert. *Letters from America*. New York: Beaufort Books Publishers, 1998.
- Brooke, Rupert. *The Poetical Works*. Ed. Geoffrey Keynes. London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1970.
- Buchan, John. *The Battle of the Somme*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1917.
- Buchan, John. *The Future of War*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916.
- Buitenhuis, Peter. *The Great War of Words*. London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1989.
- Bullard, Robert L. *Personalities and Reminiscences of the War*. New York: Doubleday, 1915.
- Burrill, Mary Powell. *Aftermath. Black Female Playwrights, An Anthology of Plays Before 1950*. Ed. Kathy A. Perkins. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Butler, John Sibley. "African Americans in the Military." *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Caesar, Adrian. *Taking It Like A Man*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.
- Cather, Willa. *One of Ours*. New York: Random House, Vintage Classics Edition, 1991.
- Chambers, John Whiteclay, II. *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America*. New York: Free Press, 1987.
- Cixous, Helene. "The Laugh of the Medusa. Trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Summer 1976.
- Clark, Judith Freeman. *Almanac of American Women in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987.
- Cleghorn, Sara N. *Threescore: The Autobiography of Sarah N. Cleghorn*. New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1936.

- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria. The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Seventh Edition, Volume 2A*. Ed. M. H. Abrams. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000.
- Conder, Frederic. *A Few Pages from the Diary of an Ambulance Driver*. New York: Dutton, 1918.
- Conrad, Joseph. *The Nigger of the "Narcissus": A Tale of the Sea*. London: J. M. Dent, 1929.
- Cooke, Miriam. *Women and the War Story*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Cooperman, Stanley. *World War I and the American Novel*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1967.
- Coroneos, Con. "Flies and Violets in Katherine Mansfield." *Women's Fiction and the Great War*. Ed. Suzanne Raitt and Trudi Tate. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Cowley, Malcolm. *Exile's Return*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994.
- Cowper, William. *The Task, Book V, The Winter Morning Walk*. Menston: Scholar Press, 1973.
- The Crisis*. June 1917.
- Crowder, Enoch. *Second Report of the Provost Marshal General*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing, 1919.
- Crowell, Benedict and Robert Wilson. *How America Went to War*. New Haven: The Yale University Press, 1921.
- Culbert, David. "Propaganda and Public Relations, Government." *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*. Ed. John Whiteclay Chambers II. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Cull, Nicholas J, David Culbert and David Welch. *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present*. Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2003.
- Cunningham, Stanley. *The Idea of Propaganda: A Reconstruction*. Westport: Praeger, 2002.

- Daggett, Mabel Potter. *Women Wanted: The Story Written in Blood Red Letters on the Horizon of the Great War*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918.
- Damon, Sam Foster. *Amy Lowell: A Chronicle with Extracts from her Correspondence*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935.
- De Saussure, Ferdinand. "Nature of the Linguistic Sign. *Course in General Linguistics, Linguistics, 1923*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.
- Debs, Eugene V. *Walls and Bars*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1927.
- Deland, Margaret. *Small Things*. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1919.
- Delany, Paul. *D. H. Lawrence's Nightmare: The Writer and His Circle in the Years of the Great War*. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Delany, Paul. *The Neo-pagans: Rupert Brooke and the Ordeal of Youth*. New York: The Free Press, 1987.
- Dos Passos, John. *The Fourteenth Chronicle: Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos*. Ed. Townsend Ludington. Boston: Gambit Incorporated, 1973.
- Dos Passos, John. *Three Soldiers*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921.
- Doty, Madeline Z. "Die Mutter: A True Story," *Four Lights*, Women's Peace Party Papers, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.
- Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *To Arms!* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914.
- Dunbar-Nelson, Alice. "I Sit and Sew." *The Dunbar Speaker and Entertainer*. Ed. Alice Dunbar-Nelson. Naperville (IL): Nichols, 1920.
- Dunbar-Nelson, Alice. *Mine Eyes Have Seen. War Plays by Women*. Ed. Claire M. Tylee with Elaine Turner and Agnes Cardinal. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Eksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. London: Black Swan, 1990.
- Faulkner, William. *Essays, Speeches and Public Letters*. Ed. James B. Meriwether, London: Chatto & Windirs, 1967.
- Federal Council, General War-Time Committee, File 1. September 25, 1918.

- Ferguson, George O. "The Intelligence of Negroes at Camp Lee, Virginia." *School and Society* 9. 14 June 1919.
- Ferguson, Niall. *The Pity of War*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
- Finzi, Kate. *Eighteen Months in the War Zone*. London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1916.
- Fisher, Dorothy Canfield. *Home Fires in France*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1918.
- Fisher, Dorothy Canfield. Letters from the Wilburn Collection of the University of Vermont, 1912 - 1916.
- Fisher, Dorothy Canfield. "A Pyrrhic Victory." *Everybody's Magazine*, 1907.
- Foucault, Michel. "A Preface to Transgression." *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Gibbs, Philip. *Realities of War*. London: Heinemann, 1920.
- Glover, Jon and Silkin, John, eds. *The Penguin Book of First World War Prose*. London: Penguin Books, 1990.
- Goldman, Dorothy and Judith Gledhill and Judith Hattaway. *Women Writers and the Great War*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995.
- Gray, John. *Liberalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Grondys, L. H., Ph.D. *The Germans in Belgium*. London: William Heinemann, 1915.
- Hansen, Arlen J. *Gentlemen Volunteers*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996.
- Hassall, Christopher. *Rupert Brooke: A Biography*. London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1964.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.
- Hemingway, Ernest. "A Natural History of the Dead." *The Short Stories*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

- Hemingway, Ernest. *Selected Letters 1917-1961*. Ed. Carlos Baker. New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1918.
- Holt, Carlyle H. "The Inspector's Letter Box." *Friends of France: The Field Service of the American Ambulance Described by its Members*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916.
- Hull, Gloria. *Color, Sex & Poetry. Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Hunton, Adele and Kathryn Johnson. *Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces*. New York: AMS Press, 1920.
- Hynes, Samuel. *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. London: Bodley Head, 1990.
- Johnson, James Weldon. *Black Manhattan*. New York: Knopf, 1930.
- Junger, Ernest. "Total Mobilization." *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Richard Wolen. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.
- Keegan, John. *The Face of Battle*. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.
- Keegan, John. *The First World War*. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.
- Keynes, Geoffrey, ed. *The Letters of Rupert Brooke*. London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1968.
- Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness Unto Death*. Trans. Walter Lowrie. New York: Doubleday, 1954.
- Kipling, Rudyard. *The New Army*. New York: Doubleday and Page, 1914.
- Klein, Yvonne, ed. *Beyond the Home Front: Women's Autobiographical Writing of Two World Wars*. New York: New York University Press, 1997.
- Koistinen, Paul A. C. *Mobilizing for Modern War: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1865-1919*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997.
- Kucich, John. *The Power of Lies: Transgression in Victorian Fiction*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.



- Kuhlman, Erika A. *Petticoats and White Feathers: Gender Conformity, Race, the Progressive Peace Movement, and the Debate Over War, 1895-1919*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997.
- Labrie, Ross. *The Catholic Imagination in American Literature*. Columbia (MO): University of Missouri Press, 1997.
- Laskowski, William E. *Rupert Brooke*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.
- Lecerle, Jean-Jacques. "Diabolism and Angelism, Dialogue, Meaning and Nonsense." *English Studies in Transition: Papers from the ESSE Inaugural Conference*. Eds. Robert Clark and Piero Boitani. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Lehman, John. *The Strange Destiny of Rupert Brooke*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980.
- Lewis, Wyndham. *Blasting and Bombardier*. London: Eyre & Spottswood, 1937.
- Lloyd George, David. *War Memories*. London: Odhams, 1938.
- Longnecker, Richard N. *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair C. *A Short History of Ethics*. New York: Macmillan, 1966.
- MacIntyre, William. *Colored Soldiers*. Macon: Burke, 1923.
- Madigan, Mark. "Dorothy Canfield Fisher." *Legacy*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1992, 54.
- Marshall, S. L. A. *World War I*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964.
- Masefield, John. *The Old Front Line*. New York: Macmillan, 1917.
- Masterman, Lucy. *C. F. G. Masterman*. London: Cassells, 1939.
- Mencken, H. L. *Smart Set*. October 1922.
- Middlebrook, Martin. *The First Day on the Somme*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1917.
- Montague, Ashley. *Man's Most Dangerous Myth*. New York: Praeger, 1963.
- Mosier, John. *The Myth of the Great War: A New Military History of World War I*. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.

*New York Journal of Commerce*, August 13, 1914.

*The New York Times*. 16 October 1915.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche: The First Complete and Authorized English Translation*. Ed. Oscar Levy. New York: Gordon Press, 1974.

O'Brien, Sharon. "Combat Envy and Survivor Guilt: Willa Cather's 'Manly Battle Yarn.'" *Arms and the Woman: War, Gender, and Literary Representation*. Eds. Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Munich Auslander, and Susan Merrill Squier. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Palmer, Frederick. *Newton D. Baker: America at War*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1931.

Parker, Sir Gilbert. *Is England Apathetic? A Reply*. London: Darling, 1915.

Pearsall, Robert Brainard. *Rupert Brooke: The Man and the Poet*. Amsterdam: Rodopi N. V., 1974.

Percy, Walker. *The Message in the Bottle*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1995.

Percy, Walker. *The Moviegoer*. New York: Vintage International, 1988.

*Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*. December 21, 1899.

Proctor, H. H. *Between Black and White*. New York: Pilgrim, 1925.

"Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation, June 6, 2002. [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020608-8.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020608-8.html)

"Remarks by the President at the Signing of H.R. 5005 the Homeland Security Act of 2002, November 25, 2002. [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/22html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/22html).

Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision. *College English* 34, 1972.

Roosevelt, Theodore. *America and the World War*. Toronto: McLeod and Allen, 1915.

Rumsford, W. Kerr. "An American Ambulancier at Verdun." *The World's Work*, 33, December 1916.

- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Sassoon, Donald. *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in The Twentieth Century*. New York: The New Press, 1998.
- Sassoon, Siegfried. *Collected Poems*. New York: Viking Press, 1949.
- Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Schwind, Jean. "The 'Beautiful' War in *One of Ours*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 30, 1984.
- Scott, Emmett J. *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War*. New York: Arno Press, 1969.
- Seltzer, Mark. *Bodies and Machines*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Shipley, Joseph T. *Dictionary of Word Origins*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1945.
- Sorley, Charles. *The Letters of Charles Sorley*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1919.
- Statutes at Large of the United States of America, Volume XL, Part 1, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919.
- Taylor, A. J. P. *English History 1914-1915*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle*. Trans. Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Trout, Steven. "Willa Cather's *One of Ours* and the Iconography of Remembrance." *Cather Studies* 4, 1999, 187-204.
- Tylee, Claire M. *The Great War and Women's Consciousness*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990.
- Tylee, Claire M. with Elaine Turner and Agnes Cardinal, ed. *War Plays by Women*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Waddington, Mary King. *My War Diary*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917.

- Washington, Ida H. *Dorothy Canfield Fisher: A Biography*. Shelburne (VT): New England Press, 1982.
- Weintraub, Stanley. *Silent Night*. New York: The Free Press, 2001.
- Wells, H. G. *The War That Will End War*. London: Palmer, 1914.
- Westwell, Ian. *World War I Day by Day*. Osceola, WI: MBI Publishing Company, 2000.
- Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Wilson, Edmund. *Shores of Light*. New York: Straus and Giloux, 1995.
- Wilson, Jean Moorcroft, ed. *The Collected Poems of Charles Hamilton Sorley*. London: Cecil Woolf Publishers, 1985.
- Woodress, James. *Willa Cather: A Literary Life*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.
- Woodson, Carter G. *The Negro in Our History*. Washington D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1921.
- Woodson, Carter G., ed. *The Works of Francis J. Grimke*. Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1942.
- Zelizer, Barbie. *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Zieger, Robert H. *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001.
- Zola, Emile. *La Bête Humain*. Trans. L. W. Tancock. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

## Appendix A

Alfred Leete

*Join Your Country's Army, 1914*



## Appendix B

E. V. Kealy

*Women of Britain Say - “GO!”*





Appendix C

James Montgomery Flagg  
*I Want You, 1917*



Appendix D

Carl Rakeman

*Five Thousand by June, 1917*

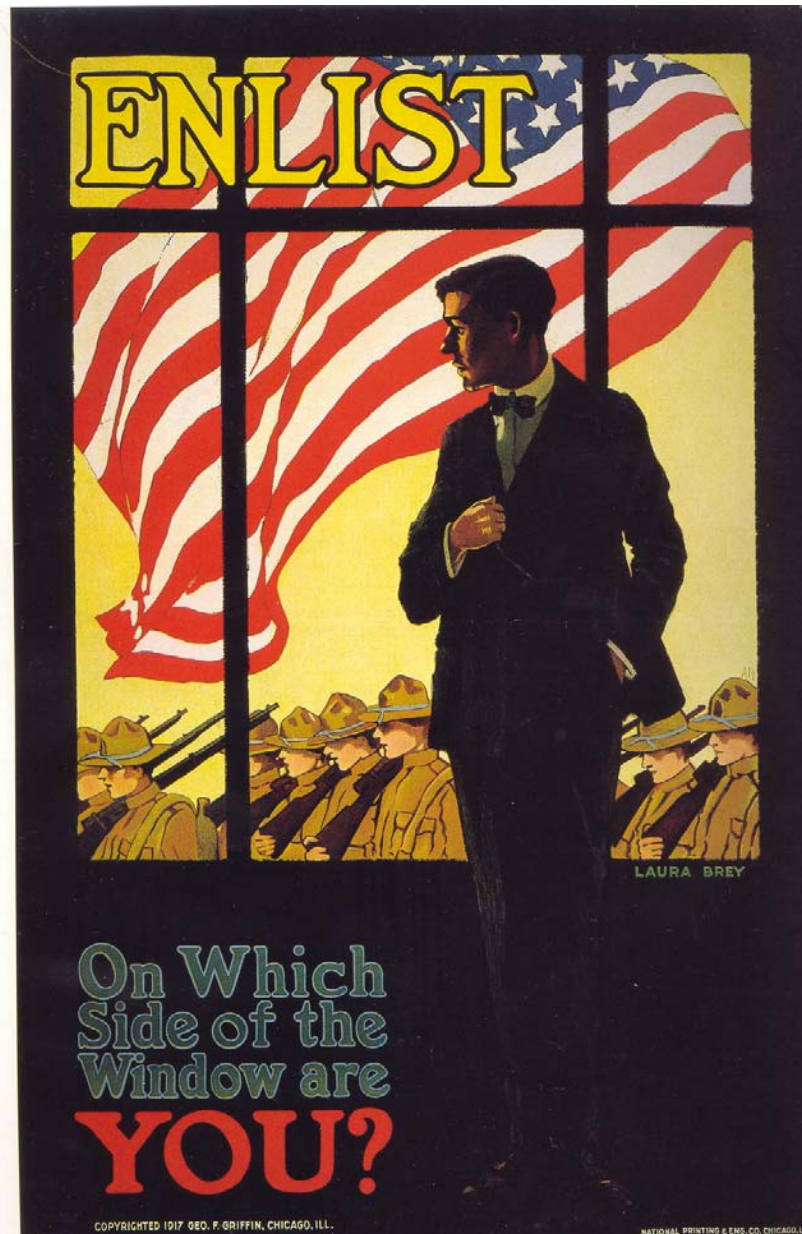




## Appendix E

Laura Brey

*On Which Side of the Window Are You?*, 1917



## Appendix F

Charles Gustrine  
*True Sons of Freedom, 1918*



### **Vita**

Margaret L. Clark, the youngest daughter of Edward Joseph and Edith Louise Cullington Clark, was born on July 29, 1948, in Concord, Massachusetts. After graduating from Highland School and Concord-Carlisle High School in 1966, she attended Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, as a Trustee scholar until the birth of her son. In 1995, she relocated to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and resumed her undergraduate studies at Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English literature and minors in history and African and African-American studies in 1997. She received a Master of Arts degree in English in 1999 from the same university, where she is presently a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English with a minor in history.